

RELATIONSHIP ATTACHMENTS

A SELF-STUDY JOURNAL



*Recognize Patterns
of Relationships*

*Understand the Origins
of your Attachment Wounds*

How your Past Affects your Current Intimacy

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Relationship Attachments

This Self-study journal is going to teach you some basics of attachment theory, and how you can recognize patterns to integrate them into your day-to-day life. In no way is this a replacement from doing the deeper work with a registered therapist, but it will help you get on the right track!

Firstly, what is attachment theory?

Attachment can be defined as a deep and enduring emotional bond between two people in which each seeks closeness and feels more secure when in the presence of the attachment figure. Beginning in the 1950s, work began on studying infants through childhood experiences with their primary caregivers. Studies found that young children need to develop a safe and trusting relationship with at least one primary caregiver for healthy social and emotional development later in life. This work continues to expand today into how we, as adults, have learned to respond (or not) in our intimate relationship with others now.

Why does attachment matter?

To have meaningful, close relationships, we must develop a deeper connection and understanding of each other. It means learning to be vulnerable. When this happens between two people, we build safety, trust, respect and create environments where ideas, problem solving, affection, and caring can flourish. If we have never learned to feel safe with our most significant caregivers, many of us may have built invisible walls around our ability to go to that place of vulnerability. Lack of emotional fluency and healthy communication is the main culprit of disconnection in relationships.

Now that we have some of the basics, let's get to work!



Recognizing Relationship Patterns

"Our loved one is our shelter in life. When this person is unavailable and unresponsive, we are assailed by a tsunami of emotions – sadness, anger, hurt and above all, fear. This fear is wired in. Being able to rely on a loved one, to know that he or she will answer our call is our innate survival code. Research is clear, when we sense that a primary love relationship is threatened, we go into a primal panic." -Sue Johnson

The primal panic is our survival response to a perceived danger in our relationship. When we sense a threat, we go into the classic "fight, flight, freeze, or fawn". It's important to know your part in the dance of disconnection.

Fight - Do you pursue with questions? Need to talk? Blow up their phone with messages? Yell? Demand? Threaten?

Flight - Do you withdraw? Back away? Busy yourself with tasks? Rationalize and defend?

Freeze - Do you become silent? Still? Unsure of what to do?

Fawn - Do you say yes, when you mean no? Do you avoid uncomfortable conversations with pleasing, and giving in?

We are emotional creatures, and we long for unconditional love. When it is not available to us, or withdrawn from us, it can leave a significant, yet subconscious message. We may take on beliefs about ourselves that are not often realized until adulthood, when we begin intimate relationships of our own.

Did you have a parental figure who was emotionally unavailable? Or would they rage? Drink? As a child, we are unable to see the folly of their behaviour, and instead internalize it. "I'm not good enough." "I'm unlovable" "I have to keep quiet, and not speak up." "I am making them mad."

We become hyper-vigilant to our surroundings. We begin the dance of taking responsibility for other's actions and emotions. We people please - not wanting to rock the boat. We agree and say yes, when we really want to say no.

We also may begin to find shelter and protection in our behaviours. We may learn to hide, or withdraw into isolation. We may learn to try calm others by over-explaining. Rationalizing. The list goes on...



Understanding the Origins of your Attachment Wounds

Now think about your life and answer some questions:

As a child what I learned about sharing emotions was

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.....

My mother's personality (or most significant female caregiver) was

.....
.....

The relationship I had with my mother was

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.....

My father's personality (or most significant male caregiver) was

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.....

The relationship I had with my father was

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.....

Conflict in my home growing up looked like

.....
.....

When that would happen, I would (fight, flight, freeze, fawn?) What was the behaviour?

.....
.....

Did you have someone that you would go to for comfort? If yes, who & why? If no, what stopped you?

.....
.....



The message I began to believe about my problems/struggles growing up was

.....
.....

What I most needed back then was

.....
.....

How this feels similar today is

.....
.....

How do you think your experiences back then affected your adult personality?

.....
.....

My hidden fear in this is

.....
.....

As you can see, the environment that we grow up in has a direct influence on how we attach with others as an adult. What we had to do to keep ourselves going, or feeling safe usually continues in some manifestation now.

Lastly, write a couple paragraphs of how you would like to use this new information to learn to cultivate healthier, more secure relationships.



How your Attachment Style affects your Current Intimacy

As you may have learned in the previous section, attachment style is formed during early childhood, teen years, and also as a result of the interactions, experiences and perceptions that you encounter along your life path. Your Attachment Style ultimately is what affects how you form adulthood attachments and determines the ways in which you behave in your relationships. What many people don't realise is that your Attachment Style is one of the most influential forces in a relationship. This means that the success - or failure - of a relationship is largely determined by your Attachment Style.

There are four primary kinds of Attachment Styles:

Dismissive Avoidant, **Fearful** Avoidant, **Anxious** Preoccupied and **Secure**. Each Style has their own beliefs, perceptions, ways that they process emotions.

Secure

Trusting, independent but close, and open to expressing affection in confident ways with their partners.



Anxious- Preoccupied

Needing reassurance from their partners, seeking closeness and intimacy more intensely and often more quickly than their partner is ready for.



Dismissive- Avoidant

Doesn't feel comfortable with emotional intimacy, and tends to pull away from others if they feel hurt or rejected.



Fearful- Avoidant

A combination of avoidant and anxious, often confused and giving mixed signals of pushing away and craving more connection



Attachment in your Adult Relationships

Now, think about your relationships as an adult:

Looking at the previous page, what style would best describe you?

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.....

In my relationships as an adult, I find that I often feel

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.....

When I'm feeling this way, I usually start behaving like this:

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.....

When I start doing that, this is what I then notice from the other person:

.....
.....

And the unspoken message or hidden fear I receive is

.....
.....

And this belief causes me to

.....
.....

The conversation/action that would begin to counter this cycle would be

.....
.....



Growing Forward!

Now it is time to face your fears, and begin to change the cycle one step at a time. Have those hard conversations. Draw those boundaries. Be the safe adult to your inner child who is needing your comfort.

If this old cycle was to change, this is how it would affect my life in a positive way:

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My hope is that this information plants the seeds of curiosity and growth in you - helping you become more confident and congruent in who you are, what you believe, and how to achieve the attachment you deserve.

I look forward to supporting all who feels called to continue the work! You can book at <https://lifeshine.janeapp.com/> and you can also find me on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/lifeshinecounselling>

All the best,

Chris Bader



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