

# Earning a Secure Attachment Style

Healing Attachment Wounds

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Why am I so geeked out  
about attachment?

1)

**The nature of your attachments has a significant part to play in the structure of your mind/brain/personality**

2)

Attachment (and consequently brain structure)  
is **malleable/changeable**

*therapists in general tend to be people  
who are geeked out on change*

3)

Understanding attachment was hugely important in my own personal process

4)

It is inevitable that attachment brings us back to the category of story... and stories are where we find the power to transform our"selves"...

It is the **relational process** by which we develop our identity, our "self", and our sense of worthiness for connection....

It is the place where  
the **we** becomes an **I**

It is the external experience of **attunement, warmth, and empathy** from a caregiver that creates an internal experience of **security, rest, and a sense of a dignified self**

# **The Biological Side of Attachment:** Basic Brain Development in Relationship to our Primary Caregivers

## **Mirror Neurons:**

Mirror Mirror on my caregiver's face

## **The Prefrontal Cortex:**

Predicting our ability to soothe ourselves

## **The Amygdala:**

How an unresolved attachment experience  
can make you feel nuts

# The Four Attachment Styles in Brief:

Attachment Styles are coping skills that develop into relational patterns...

Attachment Styles are constructed categories, and therefore do not encompass any one person with full accuracy...

Attachment Styles can differ with each individual caregiver, and differ in adult relationships depending on the dynamic with that parent

We tend to internalize the attachment pattern of the caregiver whom we most strongly identify with (the "good" caregiver, or the same gender caregiver, or the caregiver we spent the most time with)

# Secure Attachment Style

Those who are lucky enough to be adopted into, or born into families with caregivers who were/are either:

1) Raised in families with secure attachment patterns

**OR**

2) Able to resolve their own attachment traumas and deficiencies by earning a secure attachment style



(ALSO in the case of interracial adoptions, caregivers from more privileged races/ethnic backgrounds or phenotype must be able to acknowledge, understand, and explain racial privilege to their child)

# Insecure Ambivalent Attachment Style

## (Preoccupied Attachment)

Those who were adopted into or born into relationships with caregivers who were/are:

1) **Unpredictable** in their availability to a child  
(Sometimes attuned, connected, and warm, and sometimes unable to be so)



Possible Examples:

- Caregivers with depression, PTSD, etc.
- Caregivers who are in abusive relationships, or difficult careers, etc

# Insecure Avoidant Attachment Style

## (Dismissing Attachment Style)

Those who were adopted into or born into relationships with caregivers who were/are either

1) **Dismissive** of the child's inner experience

OR

2) **Unable to attune** to the child's inner experience



Possible Examples:

The socio-cultural perceptions of a "non feeling" masculinity, or a "helicopter" parent, or a parent who is intellectually or emotionally delayed)

# Insecure Disorganized Attachment Style

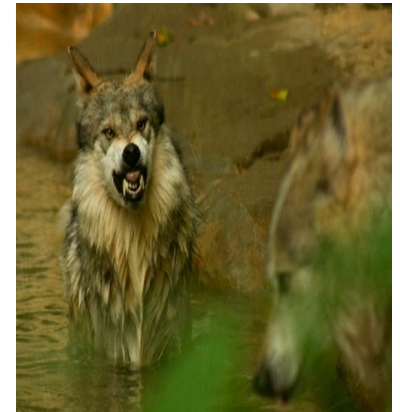
## (Fearful Attachment)

Those who were adopted into or born into relationships with caregivers who were/are either:

1) **Aggressive** in their responses to the child  
(either physically or emotionally)

2) **Overly consuming** of the child  
(inappropriately affectionate, or idealizing)

3) **Dangerously neglectful** of the child  
(left alone at too early of an age, malnourished, etc)

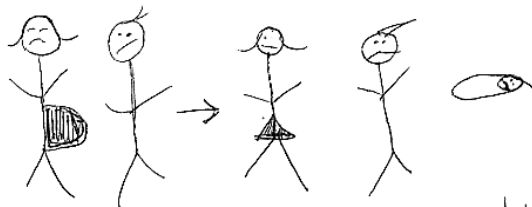


Possible Examples:

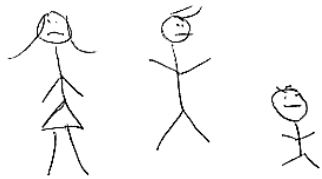
Caregivers with personality disorders or severe mental illness, borderline, narcissistic, sociopath, schizophrenic, etc

# Human Development: Attachment Trauma

## Early Childhood

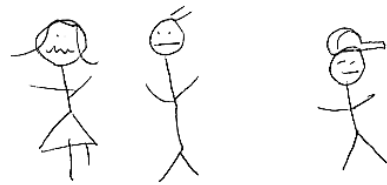


Relationships are unpredictable, tense, disconnected, scary and cold. There is presence of emotional or physical danger and there is little empathy or comfort for child.

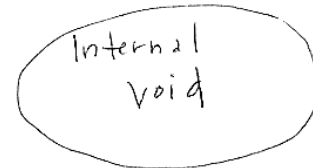


child feels isolated, angry, confused, scared and shamed. Environment is dismissive, anxious, or violent. Child has very little experience of feeling heard or seen.

## Adolescence



Themes of isolation, anxiety and low self-esteem continue. Child has difficult experiences with peers and often feels "different" or "messed up" internally. Family is not attuned to vulnerability inherent in adolescence and dismisses or misses emotional needs of child.



absence of influence or care

Child seeks out destructive coping patterns such as volatile peers, alcohol, drugs, fights and isolation. Child may become increasingly angry towards self or others, and may begin emulating parents behaviors.

## Adulthood



adult feels uncomfortable in their sense of self and often suffers from anxiety, depression, and contempt towards self & others.



develops relationships that are anxious and unpredictable, and may become unpredictable towards others.



Continues patterns of insecurity, fear, violence, disconnection or dismissive tendencies.

**BRAIN DEVELOPMENT:** Attachment trauma creates a thin neo-cortex and an enlarged **AMYGDALA** and overactive **LIMBIC SYSTEM** which creates fight, flight, freeze responses,

**HYPERVIGILANCE, REACTIVITY & CONTROL ISSUES**

# Resolving Insecure Attachment Patterns

(Both Externally and Internally)

1.

Acknowledge the Attachment Pattern (s) that are insecure

# 2.

Begin narrating your attachment experience with a therapist, therapy group, or a highly empathetic, attuned, aware, and committed natural support....

# 3.

In these conversations with a caring and committed "other", work towards allowing yourself to express natural emotions related to your experiences (such as sadness, fear, and anger)

4.

Begin editing out interpretations that create shame and self-contempt

# 5.

Through your grieving and editing process, you also begin to inherently practice mindfulness skills, self-attunement, and self-alliance.

6.

Your neo-cortex will create **new neural pathways** based on these integrating experiences with this caring "other", and will restructure the ways in which your brain functions and responds in moments of pain and discomfort....

# 7.

As your mind and body become more **receptive to connection** both to yourself and others, your mind and interpersonal styles will become **less reactive...**

**Relationships are always complex, and often messy...**

but when it is possible to be **in the mess**, and not  
**fleeing from it** or **drowning in it**,  
our relationships can bring huge satisfaction  
and security for our lives

## **Sources Consulted:**

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