

Love and Relationships

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of *God*, the Most *Gracious*, the Most
Merciful



Keep relationships sacred, let them be blessed with deep connection and intimacy, filled with passionate bliss and unconditional love.

- Maryam Hasnaa

How our childhood experiences affect our Relationships

The first 7 years of our lives are crucial for our development and who we become as adults. At that stage, we are innocent, playful and are very receptive to people's suggestions and energy. We are like sponges, absorbing our caregivers' love, joy, appreciation, fears, judgments, emotions and belief systems. The first 3 years our lives are most important, if we get the first 3 years right we are ok unless something traumatic happens after that period.

So what types of childhood experiences can have an effect on us? What types of behaviours from our caregivers shape us into our adult selves? The answer is our caregivers' ability to be completely present with us, the Act of Being. The problem is our caregivers find it difficult to be in the present moment because of different reason such as stress, unfavourable circumstances and time availability.

Real relationships don't depend on words; they depend on the capacity to be with. The energy of the other person which can be sensed as: "I am here.", "I welcome your presence.", "I appreciate you.'. Your presence gives them security and they feel safe. Communication happens in a much deeper level. Children need to connect, otherwise, they have a void. We all have the desire to belong and have nurturing relationships.

The body language and energy of the caregiver can be felt, especially by babies as they are very receptive to peoples' energy. Children then grow up with these experiences creating or shifting their personalities. Children that have emotionally or physically unavailable caregivers grow up to be insecure and defensive. They learn early on that their emotions don't matter; they are not important. When we react against anger, we reject our children and we teach them to suppress their emotions. But if we hold space for them and be there, be present, we teach them that it is safe for them to FEEL. The most important thing for children's development is relationship and connection.

In his book ‘The Mastery of Love’ Don Miguel Ruiz describes a planet where everyone has been suffering from skin disease for the past two or three thousand years. Their bodies are covered by wounds that are infected, and those wounds really hurt when you touch them. But because everyone has this disease, they believe it’s normal physiology of the skin. When the people are born, their skin is healthy, but around 3 or 4 years of age, the first wound starts to appear. By the time they are teenagers, there are wounds all over their bodies. Now, imagine how these people will treat each other. To be able to relate with one another, they have to protect their wounds. They hardly ever touch each other’s skin because it’s too painful. If by accident you touch someone’s skin, it is so painful that right away they get angry and touch your skin just to get even. Still, the instinct to love is so strong that you pay a high price to have relationships with others.

This is the world we live in, but it isn’t our skin that is full of wounds, the wounds are inside, the human mind is sick with a disease called Fear. Just like the description of the infected skin, the emotional body is full of wounds and these wounds are infected with emotional poison. The manifestation of the disease is anger, hate, sadness, envy and hypocrisy, the result of the disease is all the emotions that make humans suffer.

Imagine being completely dependent on a person for a minute, to be fed, to be clothed, we literally cannot survive without that person. Now imagine that this person doesn’t let you think for yourself, they always believe their opinion is more important than yours, they punish you if you don’t follow their rules, they lock you in a room or make you sit in a corner of a room, they are irritated by you, they might even hit you when you don’t listen to them. You would think this is abuse right? Realistically we all have experienced this in early childhood. Because we are so dependent on our caregivers, at that time we have a minimal voice and no rights, we adapt to their needs as a survival strategy. We do this because we don’t know what will happen if we are permanently abandoned or rejected by these people, so their approval means everything to us, so we confuse survival for their approval.

This causes us to mistrust other people and find it difficult to open up and be vulnerable later in life. It hurts too much.

Years after conditioning, if we fail or feel rejected, it can bring up these feelings that are stored. Associated with a threat to our security and survival, and pain associated with being hopeless and powerless. This teaches us that love from our caregivers is conditional. When love seems to be withheld we assume it's because we are not loved unconditionally. These experiences form our beliefs about people, how they are and what love is.

RELATIONSHIPS

So how does our childhood affect our adult relationships? As we grow older we form attachment styles based on the way we were treated by our caregivers. There are 4 types of attachment styles: 1. Secure attachment style. 2. Anxious attachment style, 3. Avoidant attachment style, 4. Anxious-Avoidant attachment style (also known as Disorganised) attachment style.

1. Secure attachment style: (Cool)

Core belief: "I love you and I know you love me. We rock!"

People that have a secure attachment style have had caregivers that were quick to respond to their needs, they were sensitive and consistent. They were also in tune with the child's emotions. This made the child feel secure, explorative and happy. Having a secure attachment style means that a person can deeply connect to another by being fully present. They trust that their needs will be met, so they are able to create meaningful relationships and set appropriate boundaries. They have the ability to clearly communicate and express themselves and speak their truth with love and compassion.

They are not afraid of being rejected. They become a person that can hold space for another without judging them, criticising or trying to fix them.

They honour their own feelings and the feelings of their partner and are able to ask themselves “What is this trying to teach me?” instead of “Why me?” which is a victim mentality. They create a safe environment for both partners to grow. They feel confident and secure, validated by self, there is an understanding of self and understanding of the other. There is Trust, trust in oneself that ‘no matter what happens I will be ok.’, trust in the Divine that everything happens for a reason that teaches us a valuable lesson, and finally trust in the other person. When we trust another we say to them that we honour and respect them enough to make good decisions in life. This is possible when two people have done the work of understanding and taking responsibility for the way they feel rather than blaming another for their emotions. This type of love feels like home and freedom at the same time.



2. Anxious Attachment style: (The Love addict or the Clingy one)

Core Belief: "I know I don't deserve you, but I depend on you so much."

Childhood experience:

In this case, there was inconsistency in Parents meeting the child's needs, so they don't know whether love is coming or not, leaving them confused, so the child becomes hypersensitive. This creates a fear of rejection and abandonment, therefore anxiety and fear of loss. They become very good at people pleasing and neglecting their own needs. They focus so much on not being rejected and abandoned that they reject and abandon themselves. They try too hard to meet their parent's' needs.

In Adult relationships:

When these individuals grow up they become anxious and insecure in relationships. They have very low self-esteem and will constantly try to seek approval, people please and lose themselves in the relationships, just like they did as children. They almost betray themselves. They will constantly seek validation and reassurance and this will be expressed as controlling and blaming behavior. They can be very unpredictable and somewhat charming. They can also be labeled as clingy or wanting too much closeness.

Deep down they don't feel loved and don't believe they deserve to be loved and that they matter. They feel they are unimportant and not good enough. So they overcompensate.

Because of their childhood experiences, they become poor self-soothers and are not able to meet their own needs. They struggle to be alone and are very easily infatuated. A typical behaviour would be excessive calling and texting which pushes people away, therefore they can be easily rejected.

They would often Pre-reject themselves. For example, they would say something like; "Do you want to do something on Saturday, its completely ok if you can't, I understand, so in that case ignore what I said. ", this creates unease for other people.

So how can a person with an Anxious attachment style heal and have a more secure attachment?

Things to do to heal:

1. Don't message people 15 times and push people away.
2. Reprogram core wounds – replace limiting beliefs with positive affirmations by journaling or with the help of a professional.
3. Look for proof of healthy relationships, do it repetitively to rewire your brain.
4. Question your reactions – What are your emotions trying to tell you? Our relationships with other people mirror the relationship we have with ourselves. So if we feel mistreated, ask yourself “How do I mistreat myself?” If you feel unseen, unheard, unimportant, neglected, ask yourself “Where am I neglecting myself?”
5. Learn how to self soothe, self-nurturing and self-love daily. Doing Inner child work.
Grounding yourself and learn to be in the present moment.
6. Spend time outside of the relationship, nurture your friendships, hobbies, and career. Find your purpose.
7. Forgiveness- Seek to understand caregivers' behaviour with compassion and unconditional love. (This is a practice and needs to be implemented regularly and consistently.) Don't expect yourself to do it instantly.



3. Avoidant Attachment style: (The Loner)

Core belief: “I don’t trust you, I’m better off alone.”

Childhood experience:

As children their caregivers were not very interested, they are emotionally distant, uncaring, dismissive and disengaged. Some are emotionally or physically unavailable, they can be absent from their lives by choice or due to reasons such as death or divorce. The child then learns to meet their own needs, they become super independent and don’t rely on anyone for emotional fulfilment. This is because they don’t trust that any other person will meet their needs.

In Adult relationships:

The above childhood experiences create a feeling of not being good enough and a sense of shame about that. Shame is very different from guilt. Guilt means “ I made a mistake and it will be ok.”, shame says “ I am bad, there must be something wrong with me.”, so shame is more difficult to deal with.

People with this attachment style subconsciously believe that their needs probably won’t be met in a relationship so they become emotionally distant. They avoid closeness or emotional connection altogether and become critical and intolerant. In relationships, they tend to need space and are triggered by inconsistency and criticism.

They can easily shut down after a dispute and become passive-aggressive, which is how they express their emotions of being hurt, especially if they are criticised and shamed, triggering the childhood wounds of not being good enough. They shut down to protect themselves and take long to open back up and connect.

After all, “If they were good enough, why did their caregivers neglect them or abandon them?”, they would think in the back of their head. Due to them shutting down and not expressing emotions, they would sometimes be labeled as ‘narcissist’, ‘emotionally unavailable’, ‘cold’ or ‘selfish’.

They are happy not expressing emotion, however, this becomes a problem as deep down they do crave connection just like everyone else because we are all wired for connection.

So what can they do to heal and develop a healthier way of being in a relationship?

1. Vulnerability. They need to admit their emotions to themselves and learn to feel them, acknowledge them, honour them and release them. It's ok to feel. Vulnerability is strength –it takes strength to be soft. Vulnerability will set them free and give them the power to connect and permission to be themselves.
2. Have ownership of who we are and fully accept who we are and don't accept other people's opinions or criticism as true.
3. Stop worrying about what other people think. Peoples opinion is based on peoples conditioning, projections, their story, socialisations, and fears.
4. Self-love.
5. Let go of expectation- stop letting peoples' opinion of you define your worth
6. Be more courageous- anytime we hide we diminish our capacity to connect
7. Forgive caregivers and self. (This is a practice and needs to be implemented regularly and consistently – don't expect yourself to do it instantly)



4. Anxious-Avoidant or Disorganised: (The Crazy)

Core belief: “You’re too good for me. You would just end up hurting me anyway.”

Childhood experience:

Caregivers are extremely traumatising, abusive, neglectful, erratic, frightened or frightening, passive or intrusive. They can be chaotic, insensitive, dishonest, addicted to substances, explosive, abusive, untrusting, but craving security. The state of the child is depressed, angry, completely passive, non-responsive, so they become severely confused adults with no strategy to get their needs met, as they were betrayed repeatedly. They subconsciously hold a cupful of anger and hurt.

In Adult relationships:

This attachment style is like having a combination of the Anxious and the Avoidant Attachment style. So it’s the “worst” type of attachment style to have, depending on the degree of damage done. These individuals will behave like a person with an Anxious attachment style with an Avoidant partner and Avoidant with an Anxious partner. Some might even call them ‘crazy’, ‘paranoid’ or with ‘Borderline Personality Disorder’. Because as a child they were forced to give up their boundaries, they tend to lose their identity, abandon themselves, forget about their needs and feel as though they don’t exist. This is how they survived, so they use it as a coping mechanism. In relationships they may behave violently, abusive, due to their fear of rejection and abandonment, this is a way for seeking validation, reassurance, and comfort.

As they subconsciously hold a cupful of anger and hurt about the betrayal of their caregivers, when someone lies to them or betrays them in any way, they feel it 10 times more, because it touches the unhealed wound. They feel very strong, intense emotions, almost possessed by emotion and lose control. Emotions are neuro-chemical reactions so the whole body is affected over time and it becomes a cyclical pattern.

People with a Disorganised attachment style often feel like a victim and have very low self-esteem. They often punish themselves because they believe they deserve punishment, just like in their childhood. They also feel unseen, unheard, unimportant, unloved, don’t feel safe and don’t trust others. We accept the love that we think we deserve, so people with this attachment style tend to find themselves in abusive, toxic relationships. In

this case, they need to find the courage to leave and find the self-worth and healing they deserve.

What can people with a disorganised attachment style do to heal?

1. They must start observing their emotions, recognise them and label them, for example: "I feel Anger, anxiety, etc...." Then, they need to ask themselves what meaning are they giving to these emotions, for example: "I am not lovable.", "My relationship is going to fail" and so on. This exercise will bring the subconscious limiting beliefs to conscious awareness, so they can be released.
2. They need to learn to be assertive and have clear boundaries. (Anger is not the same as being assertive, it is loving and compassionate toward self and the other). They need to understand and learn how to speak about their feelings and needs, without blame and criticism. Expressing themselves with confidence and love. Because as a child they were forced to give up their boundaries, they tend to lose their identity.
3. They need to spend time alone; e.g.. journaling, exercising, reading, meditating, nourishing the soul, painting, praying on a regular basis.
4. Recognise that people will not be able to meet their needs all the time and that's ok. People can often be busy and not available. They need to start self-validating and meeting their own needs, committing to self-love and care.

For any of these 3 insecure attachment styles to become secure, they need to break out of the cyclical pattern they are in and reprogram core patterns and beliefs at the deepest level. This can be done with the help of a professional or self-hypnosis. Noticing the emotions felt and the things that trigger them, for example feeling trapped, alone, powerless, stuck, overwhelmed, embarrassed, ashamed, angry, hurt, excluded, helpless, pressured, afraid, jealous, etc.. These emotions are here to help us, guide us. Then find what painful story they are telling themselves and what needs are still unmet. All this can be dumped on paper. The emotions and experiences and thoughts and the meaning behind them. This will bring up the subconscious beliefs such as: "Everyone will laugh at me., I am not good enough, I am deluded, stupid, alone, helpless, afraid, confused, sad, etc.."

The next step is to question these beliefs. Are they true? 95% of the time they are NOT true, they are just emotional energy carried from childhood.

These negative beliefs must be reprogrammed with healthy beliefs based on Truth, the truth that we are worthy, that we are Divine and we deserve all the blessings of this world. Reprogramming the mind needs to be done consistently because belief systems are created with repetition and emotion and can only be undone the same way. If done correctly, it can save years of suffering.



We all want to be understood, supported and unconditionally accepted, regardless of our attachment style. It can be a tough road, as they create unhealthily, co-dependant situations along the way to healing. But with hard work, patience, courage, and dedication to self-improvement, the negative core beliefs and patterns can be changed and meaningful, fulfilling, partnerships with equal give and take can be created. Partnerships that are based on unconditional love, respect, passion, commitment, and true intimacy.



So there we have it! How our
childhood affects our relationships!



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