THE Anatomy of CONNECTION

ONLINE WORKSHOP FOR PHYSICIAN COUPLES

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MODULE 1
Attachment
The Science of Love
EXERCISE

Self-Reflection

How has the myth of independence impacted your life?
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

When you express your needs, do you do it within a declaration of independence sandwich? Write down a few examples of what you may say:
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____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Who are the people that you feel you can share the important parts of your life with?
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
What stands out the most to you as you think about the fMRI hand holding study?
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

What are some of your “red X problems?”
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____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

When you think about secure connection, what does it look like? What does it feel like?
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____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

To what degree has isolation and loneliness contributed to resentment and bitterness in your relationship?
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____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
For the next three questions, think about a couple that you really admire—that you want a relationship like theirs:

How do they interact with each other?

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____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

How do they talk about each other?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

What do they do when they’re together?

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____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Take the online Do You C.A.R.E. assessment. The link is in the module file. It will be automatically scored for you and a copy of your results will be sent to your email. It will help you gain an overview of where you and your partner are on those four elements.
Understanding Attachment Styles

Attachment style is all based on how you view yourself and how you view other people. These attachment styles are formed when you were young and depended on other people to care for you and meet your needs. Your attachment style can change over time and be different with different people. Most likely you have a predominate style that you experience in most of your relationships.
With secure attachment, there is a sense that “I’m okay” and “You are okay.” Essentially, you see yourself as the kind of person worthy of love and belonging. You believe that other people will respond to your bids for connection because you are the kind of person people respond to. Likewise, you believe your partner is the kind of person who can and will show up and be there when you need him or her.

This security in your view of yourself and your partner makes it relatively easy for you to develop relationships with other people. You are comfortable being close to and depending on them. You are likewise comfortable with other people depending on you.
TYPE 2: Anxious/Preoccupied

Anxious/preoccupied attachment style is when you have a positive view of other people, but a negative view of yourself. There is a sense that your partner is okay, but that you are not worthy of love and belonging. It is hard to trust that another person would want to show up to love and support you.

You are not the person to avoid relationship closeness, however, so you stay present in the relationship, but with a lot of anxiety. This anxiety often causes you to protest disconnection through blame, criticism, or intense reactions to situations.
TYPE 3: Dismissive/Avoidant

Dismissive avoidant attachment style is when you have a negative view of other people, but a positive view of yourself. You see yourself as worthy of love and belonging, but cannot trust other people. You become very uncomfortable with emotional intimacy and may fear rejection or getting things wrong.

When conflict arises, you are often the one to either try and keep things calm or withdraw from the situation. You may also try and defend yourself from your partner’s blame and/or criticism.
Fearful or anxious-avoidant attachment style is when you have a negative view of other people and a negative view of yourself. There is a lot of relationship anxiety, but also high relationship avoidance. This can be a difficult attachment style. There is a lot of ambivalence and uncertainty.

We see this attachment style frequently with individuals who have suffered past traumas or abuse. If you relate to this attachment style best, I would encourage you to find a therapist who can help you work through this and develop stronger relationships and more peace.
ATTACHMENT HISTORY

EXERCISE A
Answer the following questions.

1. As a child, what did you do when you were upset, sad, or sick?
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   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

2. As a child, was there someone you could go to for comfort? Who was it and how would he/she respond?
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

3. Which parent were you closer to and why?
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

4. How did this person respond to you?
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
5. How consistently did you get that response?
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____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
6. What did you learn about asking for comfort from these experiences?
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____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
7. Write down five adjectives to describe your mother (see examples below)
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____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
8. Write down five adjectives to describe your father. (See examples below)
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Kind                  Warm                  Patient
Attentive             Rigid                  Available
Dismissive            Depressed              Helpful
Angry                 Preoccupied            Engaged
Gentle                Irritated              Caring
Disappointed          Loving                 Frustrated
                                          Inviting
                                          Happy
13. Did you ever feel rejected as a child?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

14. Did you ever feel pushed away or ignored?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

15. Were there any other adults you were close to as a child?

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____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

16. Have you lost anybody close to you?

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____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

17. Describe your parent’s romantic relationship.

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____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
18. What did you learn about relationships by watching them?

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____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

19. Describe a time when you have been able to rely on and find comfort in your partner?

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____________________________________________________________________________________

20. How do you typically approach your partner for attention and contact?

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____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

22. Have there been times in previous relationships where you needed comfort or companionship and could not get a response from your partner/parent/friend?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
Putting it all together:

Looking over the answers to the attachment history questions, what have you learned about yourself?

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____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

How has the way you have managed your emotions helped you in your life?

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____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

What may have been an important coping mechanism for managing distress or the need for connection as a child, may actually be hurting your relationships today. As you reflect on your attachment history, how are your coping mechanisms hurting you today?

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