



**A T T A C H M E N T  
S T Y L E S   A N D  
R E C O V E R Y**

**H O P E   F O R   L I F E  
P A R T I  
S E P T E M B E R 2 ,  
2 0 2 3**

**N A N C Y   K I R S N E R ,  
P H D   T E P , C P P ,**

**W H Y   A T T A C H M E N T   K N O W L E D G E   I S   S O  
P O W E R F U L ... L E A R N   A B O U T   Y O U R  
A T T A C H M E N T   S T Y L E   A N D   I T ' S   I M P A C T   O N  
Y O U R   R E L A T I O N S H I P S**



# ATTACHMENT THEORY & STYLES

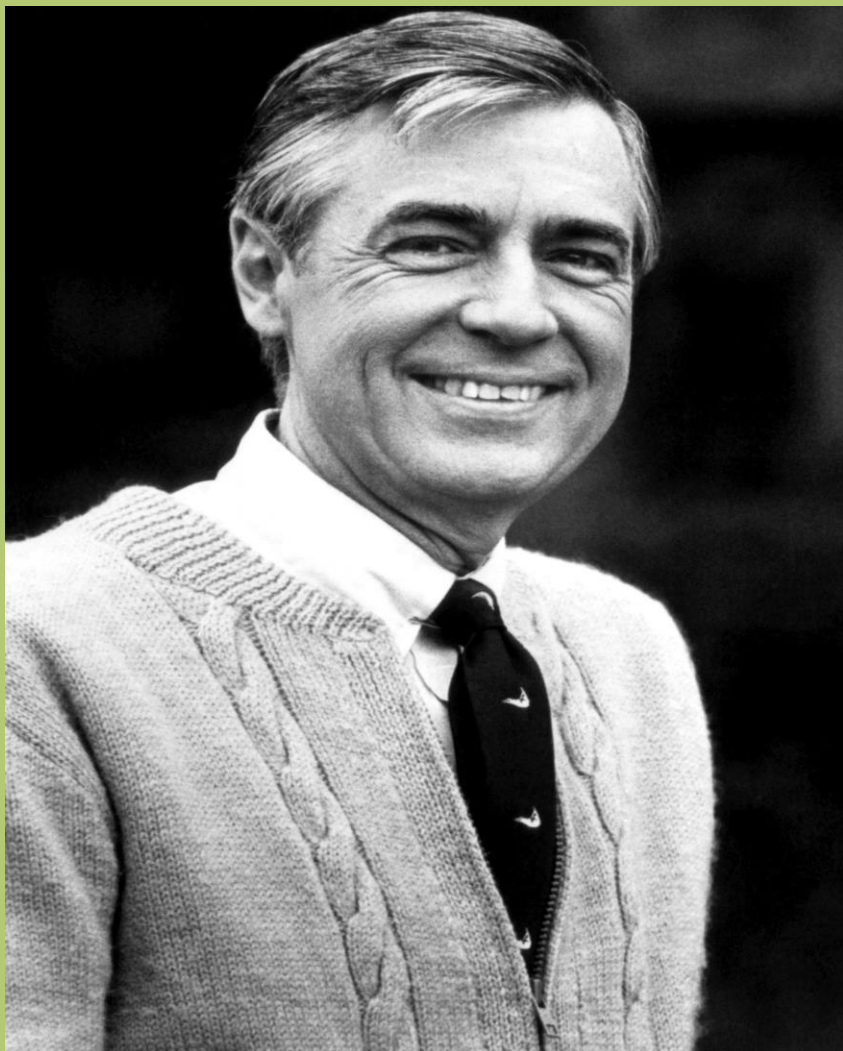
SEPTEMBER 2, 2023 PART I

## AGENDA

Welcome and Introduction - Be gentle & handle with care, curiosity, compassion

- Experiential Warm Up - Mr. Roger's - Who loved you into being?
- Attachment Theory - significance, secure base, internal working models, influence caretakers/parents/early childhood
- The Importance and Impact of Attachments Styles & Difficulties in Life & Relationships
- The 4 Attachment Styles - overview, characteristics & behaviors, examples- secure, anxious, avoidant, and disorganized
- My Attachment Style - Surveys/Sociometry/what behavior or characteristic did you resonate with?
- Group discussion: insights, experiences, take aways related to attachment styles
- Q & A
- Homework: styles of partners, family members; Prep for Attachment 2





## A MESSAGE ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS FROM Y O U R NEIGHBOR

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- In 1997, Fred Rogers won a Lifetime Achievement Award Emmy.
- In his acceptance speech, he moved the spotlight away from himself and said:
- "All of us have special ones who have "**loved us into being.**" Would you just take, along with me, ten seconds to think of the people who have helped you become who you are – those who have cared about you and wanted what was best for you in life?"

**SURVEYS THAT WILL TELL YOU YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE – Please make the time to take at least one of these, both if you can**

**What's Your Attachment Style?** Dr. Diane Poole Heller Trauma Solutions.com

More detailed; color pie chart

<https://traumasolutions.com/attachment-styles-quiz/>

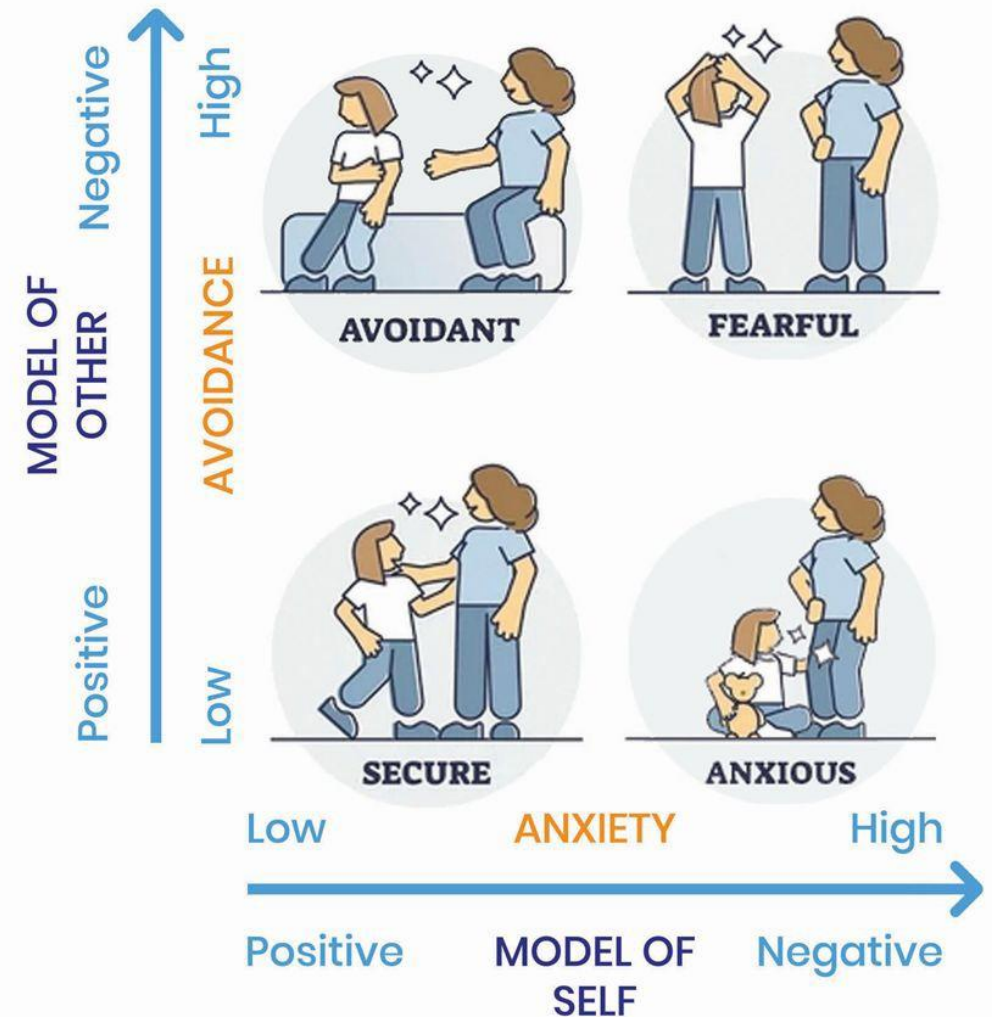
**What's Your Attachment Style?**

**Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment and How it can Help you Find - and Keep-Love.** Levine & Heller

<https://www.npr.org/2022/02/09/1079587715/whats-your-attachment-style-quiz>

# ATTACHMENT THEORY

- John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth's research found four attachment styles based upon how parent and child related. (1950's)
- When the child could use the parent as a secure base from which to self regulate and return to play, the attachment was considered secure.
- Children with secure attachments have been found to develop into more resilient and competent adults.
- In short, secure attachments support self-efficacy.



SECURE    PREOCCUPIED...DISMISSIVE...FEARFUL

# ATTACHMENT THEORY



**SECURE**  
SELF-ASSURED,  
DIRECT, RESPONSIVE



**PREOCCUPIED**  
SELF-DOUBTING,  
ANXIOUS, SENSITIVE

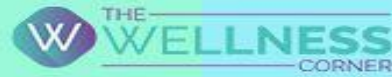


**DISMISSIVE**  
SELF-RELIANT,  
AVOIDANT, DISTANT



**FEARFUL**  
SELF-SABOTAGING,  
UNPREDICTABLE, ISOLATED

# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS?



## KNOW YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE

### Secure



I convey my feelings comfortably and honestly. I can manage my emotions really well. I do not have a fear of abandonment.

### Anxious



I constantly feel alone and this often leads me to thinking that no body cares about me. I want people to pay attention to me.

### Avoidant



I am self-sufficient and emotional connections are unnecessary for me. I am fine, all by my own.

### Disorganized



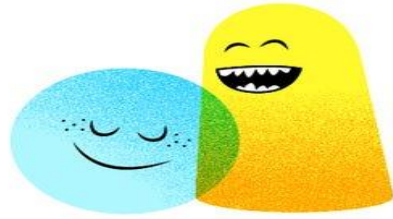
I can hardly trust anyone. I better not, based on my past experiences. It's best for me to stay away as I don't want to fall in that pit again.





# WHAT FITS ME? MY PARTNER? OTHERS IN MY LIFE?

## Attachment styles



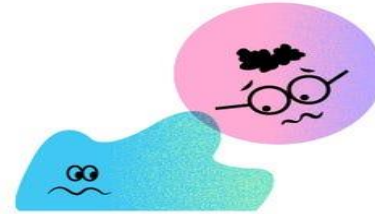
### Secure

- Healthy communication style
  - Able to ask for help when needed
- Can self-regulate emotions



### Avoidant

- Difficulty expressing emotions
- Tends to emotionally withdraw from others
  - Unwilling to ask for help



### Anxious

- Clinginess
- Fear of abandonment
- Needs constant reassurance



### Disorganized

- Incorporates characteristics of anxious and avoidant styles
  - Fear of rejection but difficulty with intimacy
  - Low self worth

# SIGNS OF *Secure Attachment*

- 1 Ability to empathize with others
- 2 Having high self-esteem
- 3 Maintaining long term relationships with others
- 4 Deriving meaning and fulfillment out of their relationships
- 5 Finding others to talk to when they're feeling upset about something
- 6 Ability to set boundaries with others when necessary
- 7 Still feeling close with their partner or partners even when dating long distance



WHAT IS HOPE FOR LIFE?  
A POSITIVE HOLDING ENVIRONMENT  
HOPE FOR LIFE = SECURE ATTACHMENTS

A **positive holding environment** provides nurturing emotional support, and consistent understanding to individuals, especially in times of stress and insecurity. In attachment theory, "holding" describes the supportive interaction between the parent/child/caregivers. In a positive holding environment you feel heard, seen, and understood. It provides a sense of safety, security, and predictability. This allows the individual to explore the world and its surroundings and develop a strong sense of self. This fosters a 'secure attachment' style. **This requires ongoing effort and constant reflection towards creating positive, fulfilling, and supportive relationships.**

# HOPE FOR LIFE = SECURE ATTACHMENT

## THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A POSITIVE HOLDING ENVIRONMENT

- 1. Emotional availability - people are attuned to your emotions and validate your experiences.
- 2. physical & emotional safety
- 3. consistency & predictability
- 4. Encouragement and support
- 5. Open communication - transparent relationships



# Signs of Anxious Attachment Style



Constant need of reassurance



Worry of rejection



Fear of infidelity



Consuming fixation on relationship



Panic or jealousy with distance



Frequent need to please

# ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT IN ADULTS

A constant need for reassurance

Very clingy

Ruminate and overanalyze

Emotional highs and lows

Negative self-view



Needing a lot of contact and support

Fear of rejection

Emotionally sensitive

Afraid of being alone

# AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT STYLE

- **The Avoidant Attachment Style** is characterized by independence, assertiveness, and self-sufficiency. People with this attachment style have no problem being single. On the other hand, they might be very sociable, popular and friendly. Such individuals usually date many people, but lose interest as soon as a sexual partner tries to connect with them on a deeper, emotional level. They pursue what they want in a relationship, regardless of others' needs.





## WHAT AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT LOOKS LIKE ...

- Men are more likely than women to be avoidant types,<sup>9</sup> but as always, there's plenty of neuroses to go around.
- I prefer to keep to myself when I'm around my partner.
- I don't talk to my partner about my feelings.
- I don't give my partner the chance to let me down.
- I don't want to be around my partner if I'm feeling upset.
- I wouldn't care if my partner left me.



# 9 SIGNS OF DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT

\* MOST DIFFICULT STYLE TO REPAIR

1. Chaotic, unpredictable, or intense relationship patterns and behaviors
2. Extreme fear of rejection, coupled with difficulty connecting to and trusting others
3. Extreme need for closeness, coupled with the tendency to avoid closeness and push others away
4. Aggressive behavior toward caregivers or partners
5. Fear of caregivers or partners
6. Negative self-image and low self-worth
7. Deep rooted shame
8. Depression and/or anxiety
9. Feeling unlovable, inadequate, or unworthy

## Signs of Disorganized Attachment in Adult Relationships

Nawal Mustafa, M.A. @thebraincoach

- You want to feel close to others but are afraid to let them in.
- You strongly fear getting hurt by people who are closest to you.
- You see relationships as unpredictable and that scares you.
- You have a hard time trusting that your partner (or others) will love and support you as you are.
- Very early on in your relationships, you start to expect the rejection, disappointment, or hurt to come.
- Your relationships often tend to end prematurely because of all of the above.

# LIMITATIONS/CONTROVERSY ABOUT ATTACHMENT THEORY/STYLES

- A serious limitation of attachment theory is its failure to recognize the profound influences of social class, gender, ethnicity, and culture on personality development. These factors, independent of a mother's/caretaker's sensitivity, can be as significant as the quality of the early attachment.
- Social class
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Culture



The harder a person's life,  
the more challenges one has,  
the less the outer world is helping –  
the more important it is to have  
inner strengths (inner resources)



Positive psychology  
is fundamentally focused on **growth** –  
in coping, well-being, and flourishing.

Lasting positive changes in the mind must  
involve lasting positive changes in the **brain**.

How can we promote those neural changes by  
how we **engage** the experiences we are having?

And meanwhile, the brain's evolved **negativity bias** continues to operate, making us good at learning from bad experiences, but bad at learning from good experiences of the inner strengths we'd like to grow.

# LOCATION OF RESOURCES

World

Body

Mind





# RESOURCES IN THE MIND – INNER STRENGTHS

Described variously as character strengths (Park, et al., 2004), virtues (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005; Fowers et al., 2021), psychological capital (Luthans & Yousseff-Morgan, 2017), positive psychological traits (Martin et al., 2015), etc.

Examples include interpersonal skills, impulse control, positive mood, new perspectives, mindfulness, self-compassion, grit, gratitude, resilience, love, motivation, secure attachment, and wisdom.

# ROLE OF YOUR MIND AND BRAIN

- Our amazing brain... To a large extent, our inner strengths must be **acquired** (rather than innate)
- This acquisition is a two-stage process of social-emotional **learning**, broadly speaking, in which the neural correlates of experience are encoded into lasting changes in the brain.



# OUR AMAZING BRAINS...

**BUT: Experiencing doesn't equal learning.**

**ACTIVATION WITHOUT INSTALLATION**

**MAY BE PLEASANT,  
BUT NO TRAIT RESOURCES ARE ACQUIRED.**

What fraction of our beneficial mental states  
lead to lasting  
in neural structure or function?

...

# RESOURCES

LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE AND  
ATTACHMENT THEORY

[“Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment and How It Can Help You Find—and Keep—Love”](#) by Amir Levine and Rachel S.F. Heller

[“Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples”](#) by Harville Hendrix

[“How to Be an Adult in Relationships”](#) by David Richo



AS ALWAYS, IN GRATITUDE FOR OUR TIME TOGETHER TO LEARN AND  
SHARE...

Dr. Nancy

*KEEP A GREEN  
BOUGH IN YOUR HEART,  
AND A SINGING  
BIRD WILL COME*

Lao Tzu



END OF PART 1 ATTACHMENT



# PART 2 ATTACHMENT





**A T T A C H M E N T  
S T Y L E S   A N D  
R E C O V E R Y 2**

**H O P E   F O R   L I F E  
P A R T 2  
S E P T E M B E R 9 ,  
2 0 2 3**

**N A N C Y   K I R S N E R ,  
P H D   T E P ,   C P P ,**

**W H Y   A T T A C H M E N T   K N O W L E D G E   I S   S O  
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A T T A C H M E N T   S T Y L E   A N D   I T ' S   I M P A C T   O N  
Y O U R   R E L A T I O N S H I P S**



## BALANCING AUTONOMY AND INTIMACY

Two great themes in life: separating/joining, independence/dependence, autonomy/intimacy, me/we

Often framed in conflict with each other, but actually complementary: . . .  
autonomy helps us feel safe in the depths of intimacy, and intimacy nurtures: : :  
the self-worth and “secure base” that foster exploration and self-expression. : : :  
. . .

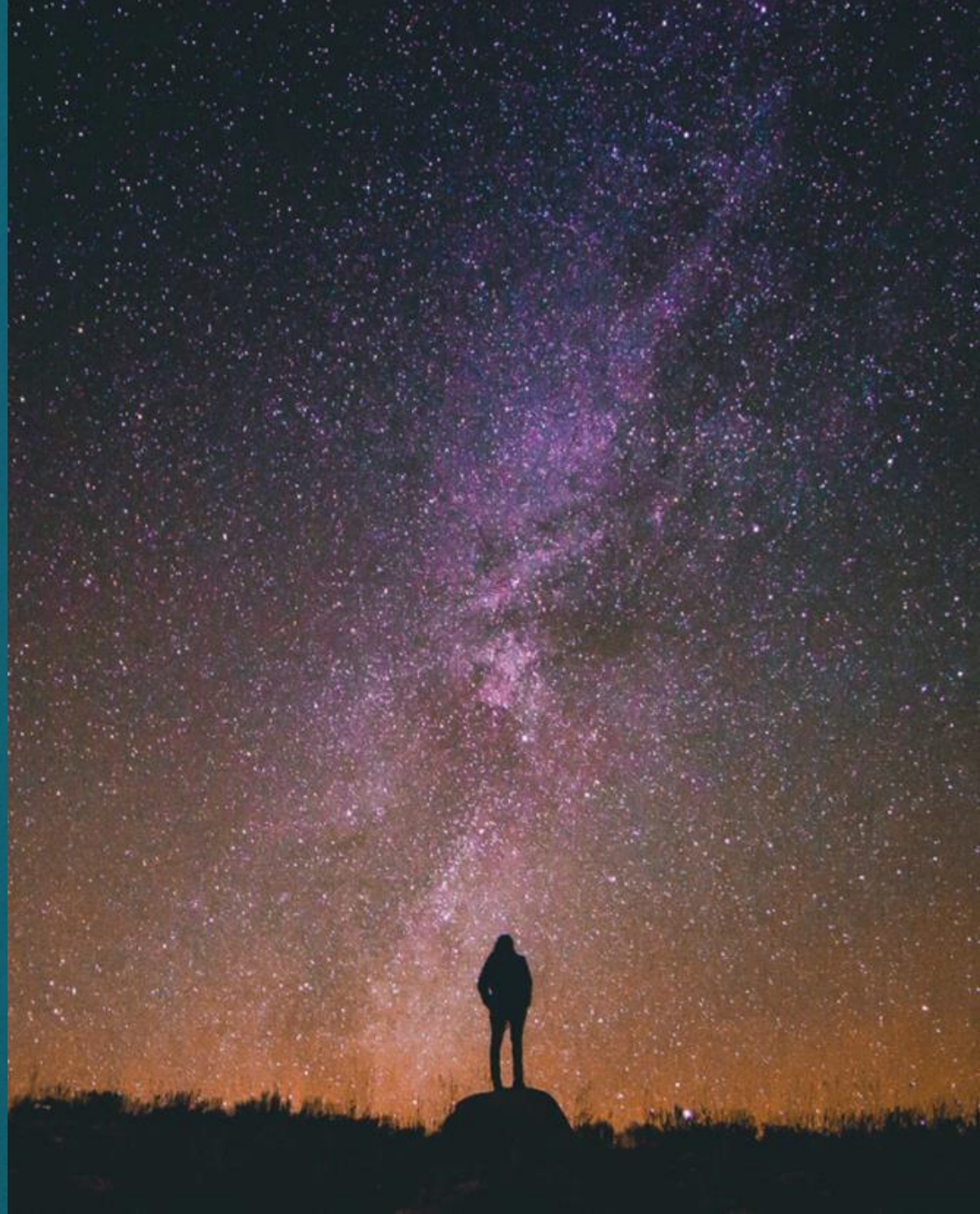
When we feel autonomous and strong inside, we are more able to pursue : :  
vulnerable needs and manage conflicts from within the “green zone” without: :  
going “red” into fear, immobilization, inadequacy, anger, or aggression. : :  
. . .

*IN THE  
BEGINNING,  
NOTHING CAME.*

*In the middle,  
nothing stayed.*

*In the end,  
nothing left.*

**Milarepa**



# ATTACHMENT THEORY & STYLES

SEPTEMBER 9, 2023 PART II

YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE!

Welcome and Introduction - Be gentle & handle with care, curiosity, compassion

- What did you notice re attachment this week? insights, experiences, take aways related to attachment styles
- My Attachment Style - Surveys/Sociometry/what behavior or characteristic did you resonate with?
- The 4 Attachment Styles - overview, characteristics & behaviors, examples- secure, anxious, avoidant, and disorganized
- Attachments Styles & Conflicts: Rupture and Repair
- Role plays: attachment style combinations
- Group discussion: Q & A

OVERCOME  
YOUR  
ATTACHMENT  
INJURY AND  
MOVE FORWARD  
STRONGER

REPAIR IS POSSIBLE WITH  
CONSISTENT WORK IN  
RELATIONSHIPS...



POST-TRAUMATIC  
GROWTH IS POSSIBLE!

AND YES, YOU CAN  
CHANGE YOUR  
ATTACHMENT STYLE!

- Mr. Fred Rogers was a profound example of post-traumatic growth. Fred Rogers' own history was one of trauma, alluding to his experience of being bullied during childhood, depression, and his own struggles with weight. He endured painful shame and loneliness, and spent time in bed, feeling isolated.



# RUPTURE & REPAIR

NOT KNOWING  
how to repair  
leads to

PLAYING  
IT SAFE

& to SHALLOW,  
UNSATISFYING  
RELATIONSHIPS



REPAIR  
IS MORE  
THAN

I'M  
SORRY

IT'S ALSO


- NAMING IT HAPPENED
- OWNING OUR ROLE
- NAMING THE IMPACT (& listening to their version)
- WONDERING HOW IT WAS CO-CREATED
- PLANNING A WAY FORWARD



REPAIR MIGHT  
FEEL LIKE A MYTH  
because it's so rare

BUT IT'S REAL!

YOUR RELATIONSHIP NEEDS ARE VALID -  
PERIOD.

A dark silhouette of a man and a woman walking away from the camera, holding hands. The woman is on the left, and the man is on the right. The background is a light, hazy gradient.

**“Most people are only as needy as their  
unmet needs.”**

**- Dr. Amir Levine**



# LOVE AND ATTACHMENT STYLE

## Secure

- positive, stable view of self
- positive, stable view of others
- interdependent
- comfortable with intimacy
- open & trusting
- sees self as equal partner
- tends to stay connected when apart
- sets & respects boundaries
- relies on self & others to manage distress
- welcomes diverse perspectives
- seeks connection, provides space

## Anxious (Pursuer)

- negative, insecure view of self
- positive, stable view of others
- tends toward dependence
- fear of losing relationship
- emotional ups and downs
- elevates partner above self
- tends toward clinginess when apart
- worries about being disappointed or abandoned
- anxious with diverse perspectives
- tends to be the pursuer in the relationship

## Avoidant (Withdrawer)

- positive, unstable view of self
- negative insecure, view of others
- independent & self-reliant
- fearful of intimacy
- elevates self above partner
- reluctant to rely on others
- views dependence as sign of weakness
- sets rigid boundaries (puts up walls)
- challenges diverse perspectives
- seeks distance, avoids attachment
- avoids or withdraws from conflict

## Fearful (Disorganized)

- negative, insecure view of self
- negative, insecure view of others
- seeks & avoids closeness
- longs for love & rejects intimacy
- struggles with scorekeeping
- fluctuates between expressive/ supportive & distant/unavailable
- sets & then doesn't maintain or respect boundaries
- embraces & rejects diverse perspectives
- pursues & withdraws to avoid being hurt





# YOUR ATTACHMENT SYSTEM

- The mechanism in our brain responsible for tracking and monitoring the safety and availability of our attachment people.
- If you have an anxious attachment style, your attachment system is supersensitive. You have a unique ability to sense when your relationship is threatened. Any hint that something may be wrong activates you. For better or worse, you pick up on very subtle details.
- If you have an anxious attachment style, it is better to wait before reacting and jumping to conclusions.
- People with other attachment styles also get activated – but not as easily.



# WHAT IS MY PARTNER'S (OTHERS) STYLE?

## Golden rules:

- Determine whether they seek intimacy and closeness.
- Assess how preoccupied they are with the relationship and how sensitive they are to rejection.
- Don't rely on 'one symptom', look for various signs.
- Assess their reaction to effective communication.
- Listen and look for what they are NOT saying or doing.



# WHY EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS HARD FOR PEOPLE WITH INSECURE ATTACHMENT STYLES

- It's hard to get in touch with what is really bothering you
- You get overwhelmed with emotions and lash out
- You tend to get quickly flooded with negative emotions and think in extremes
- If you react too quickly, you can get accusatory, critical, or threatenng



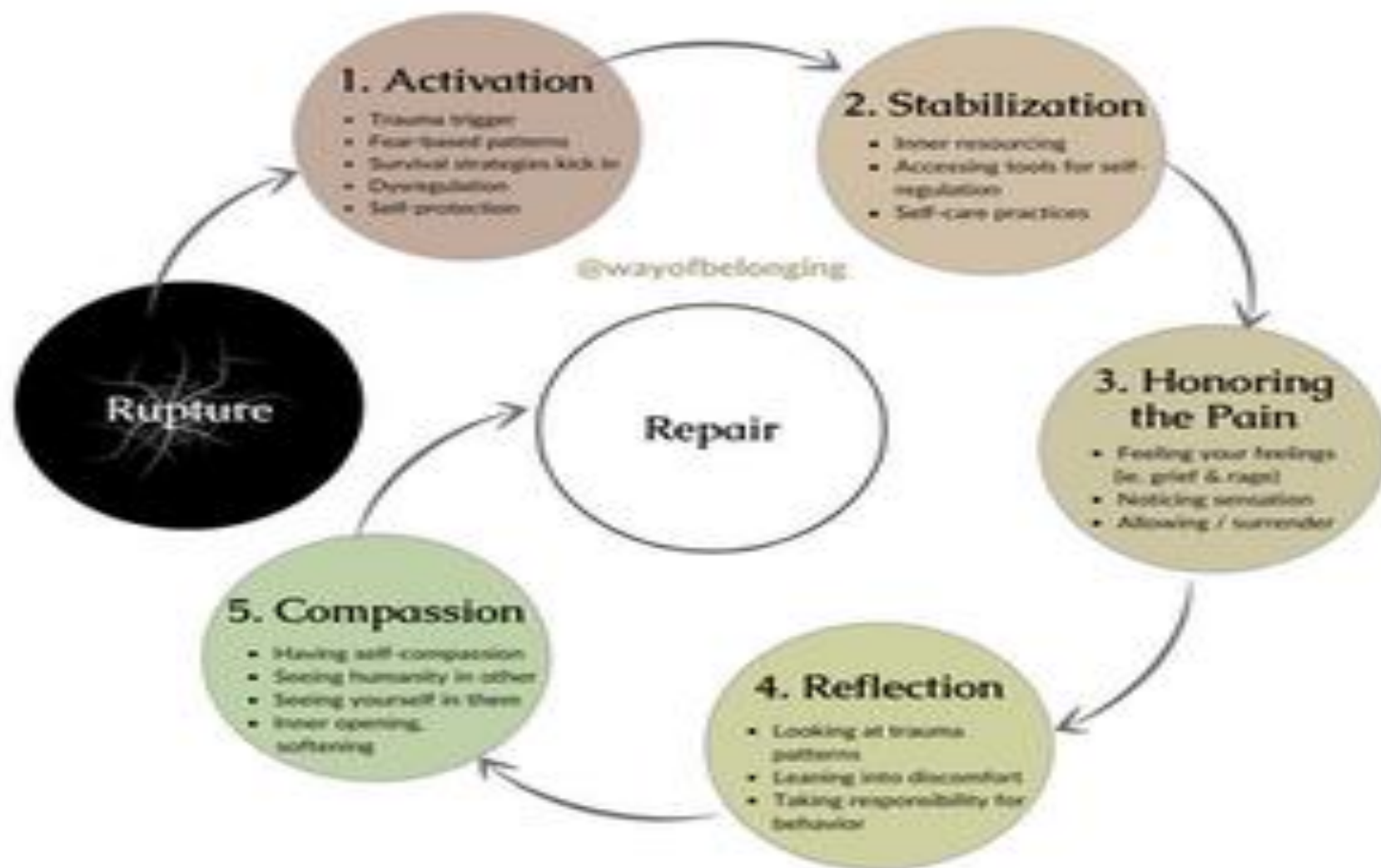
# PROTEST BEHAVIORS: LETTING YOUR ATTACHMENT SYSTEM GET THE BEST OF YOU

PROTEST BEHAVIOR = ANY ACTION THAT TRIES TO RE-ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH YOUR PARTNER AND GET THEIR ATTENTION.

- Excessive attempts to re-establish contact
- Withdrawing
- Keeping score
- Acting hostile
- Threatening to leave
- Manipulation
- Making them feel jealous



# RUPTURE TO REPAIR PROCESS



# 5 SECURE PRINCIPLES FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT

1. Show basic concern for the other person's well-being.
2. Maintain focus on the problem at hand.
3. Refrain from generalizing the conflict.
4. Be willing to engage - be present physically & emotionally.
5. Effectively communicate feelings and needs.



# HOW TO GO FROM ANXIOUS TO SECURE ATTACHMENT STYLE

With some intention and support, it's possible to shift from an anxious to a secure attachment style.

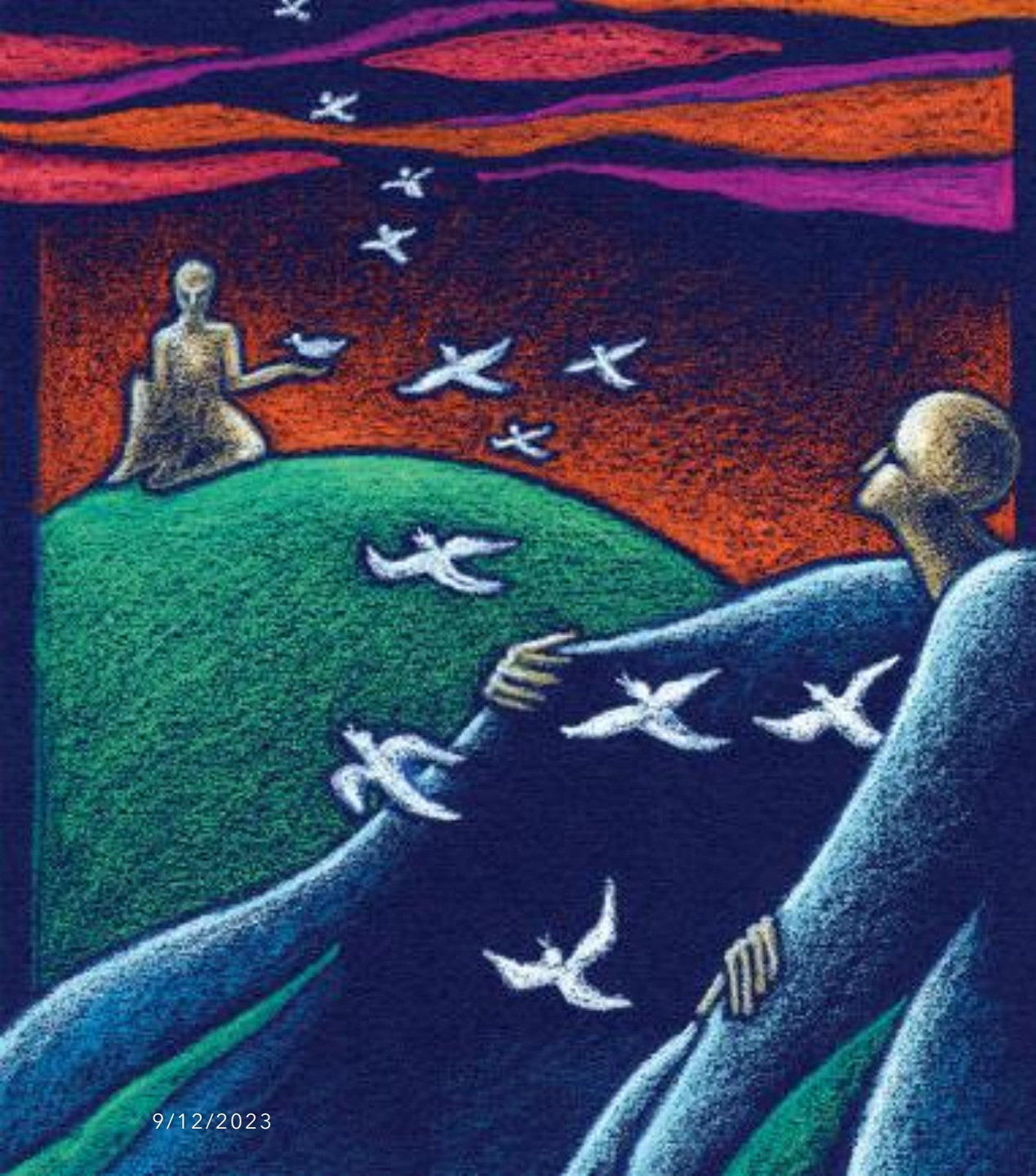
- 1. Try to **practice vulnerability** and build emotional safety in relationships. Step out of your comfort zone and ask explicitly for what you want, or say no when you don't like something. **Build emotional safety.**
- 2. Consider **a regular mindfulness practice** which may help you tune into the here and now and move through uncomfortable feelings in a positive way. Mindfulness is an important way for you to be present in the moment," so you can engage with others, and develop relationship security." Mindfulness-based activities may include: gardening, guided meditation, tai chi, walking meditation, or yoga.
- 3. **Learn about attachment theory** and [more about your attachment style](#)
- 4. Try **working with a therapist** who specializes in attachment styles and issues.

# THE 5 PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

1. Wear your heart on your sleeve.
2. Focus on your needs.
3. Be specific.
4. Don't blame.
5. Be assertive and nonapologetic.







# Express without Blame

*Directly express yourself and be heard,  
without blaming, criticizing, or demanding.*

You are offering the other person a gift through your honesty; an opportunity to be of service in the world by hearing and being supportive to you.

*Right now, I am feeling \_\_\_\_\_*

(share an emotion, such as worried, sad, or hurt,  
which does not imply it is their fault Pg.14)

*...because I am needing /valuing \_\_\_\_\_.*

(Share a need that is not dependent on their words /  
actions, such as trust, safety, honesty, teamwork Pg.15).

*Would you be willing to reflect back (tell me back)  
what you are hearing is important to me about this  
(my feelings and needs)?*

# RIGHT SPEECH

- Well-intended
- True
- Beneficial
- Timely
- Expressed without harshness
- And - ideally - wanted



# Tools For Secure Attachment

~Learn skills to soothe your partner as you soothe yourself

~Make a genuine effort to repair quickly after conflicts

~Take your partner's "core needs" seriously & work on responding in more attuned ways

~Learn to pay closer attention to your partner's emotions on a regular basis

~Explore ways to self-regulate to better manage your own emotions

~Develop skills to express your boundaries in ways that don't push people away



Created by @silvykhucasian

\*Attachment theory by John Bowlby + Mary Ainsworth



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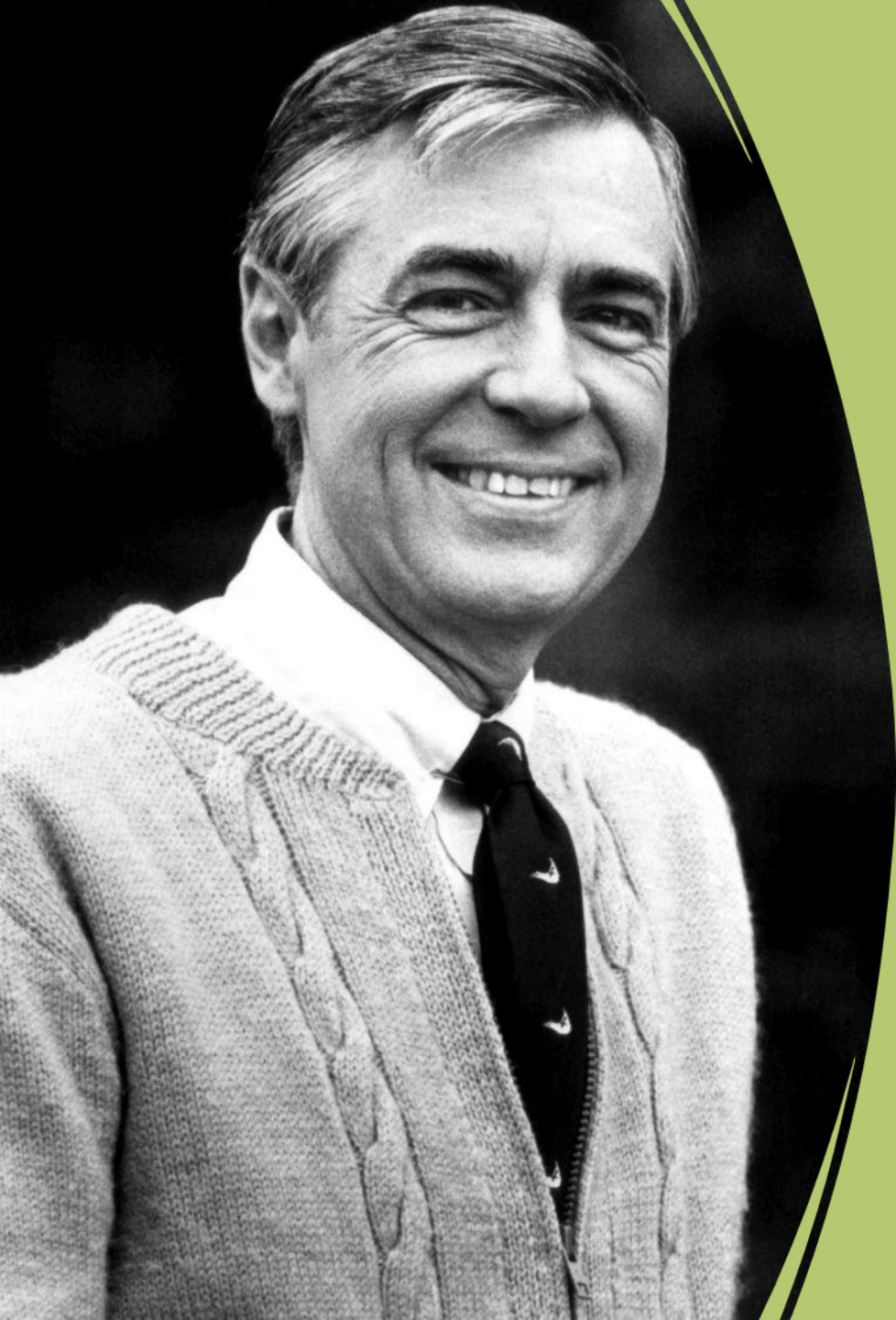


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# A LAST WORD FROM MR. ROGERS.....

---

"Love isn't a state of perfect caring. It is an active noun like struggle. To love someone is to strive to accept that person exactly the way he or she is, right here and now."

From his book *The World According to Mister Rogers: Important Things to Remember*





# RUPTURE AND REPAIR



# HOMework - BUILDING INNER RESOURCES AND MAKING THINGS STICK

- 1. A behavior/ pattern you would like to change in your relationships.
- 2. How might this be related to your attachment style?
- 3. What steps will you take towards developing more secure attachment patterns? Be specific.