Be Known, the Podcast

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Episode 78: Developing More Secure Attachments

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This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher. You’re listening to episode \_\_\_78\_\_\_. We were made for relationship, but so often our relationships are broken. And when our relationships are broken, *we* are broken. One of our deepest human desires is to be known, but we often have lost ourselves along the way. This is a podcast to help you get your relationships back to a place of wholeness. A place of authentic connection, where you feel truly known.

So come on in and sit a while. Let’s exchange fear for love and finally see what good relationships are made of. And let’s see what kind of healing happens here.

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So in our last episode, my friend Carianne Pritchett, who is also a Licensed Professional Counselor like me, shared with us some of her story of how she learned she had an insecure attachment style, told us a little about each of the types of insecure attachment and a bit about how to begin the journey to more secure attachments in our relationships, which needs to be the goal for all of us. If you aren’t sure about your attachment history and how that’s impacted your relationships today, again, I think the best route would not just be to read on it, but to seek counseling from someone familiar with this concept to help you make meaning and understand how your relationships got to the place they are today.

Today, I want to share more about what secure attachment looks like for us as adults and how to begin getting there.

Real quickly, let me remind you what attachment is:

Attachment refers to a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space. For example, some of the greatest sources of joy involve falling in love, starting a family, being reunited with distant loved ones, and sharing experiences with close others. Not surprisingly, some of the most painful experiences in people’s lives involve the disruption of important social bonds, such as separation from a spouse, losing a parent, or being abandoned by a loved one.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Remember, Carianne told us there are various types of insecure attachment styles that carry over from childhood into adulthood (anxious or ‘preoccupied,’ avoidant or ‘dismissive,’ and disorganized or ‘fearful avoidant’). I’ll link a great article in the show notes you can read to understand each one better. Here’s some helpful language from that article to help us know the point of this whole conversation:

It’s human nature to seek contact and relationships, to seek love, support, and comfort in others. In fact, according to social psychologist Roy Baumeister, the ‘need to belong’ is one of the main forces that drives individuals….Yet, love and relationships are rarely as perfect and problem-free as we would like them to be.

Maybe you have never really thought through or analyzed your behavior in relationships. Still, you might have noticed repeating patterns in your love life. Have you wondered why you keep ending up in the same situation, even with different partners? Do you get too clingy or jealous? Or do you always seem to be more involved than your partner? Maybe you want to be with someone, but as soon as things get emotionally intimate, you back off?

If you have noticed a pattern of unhealthy and emotionally challenging behaviors in your love life [or with other kinds of relationships, like friendships] , you might benefit from digging deep and exploring the way you attach to people in intimate relationships. Here is where knowing about attachment theory comes in handy.[[2]](#footnote-2) [\*added for context]

So if the goal is to develop a healthier, more secure attachment style in our relationships instead of the unhealthy, insecure ways of doing relationships, let’s talk about what secure attachment can look like in adult relationships.

As adults, people with a secure attachment style:

 - Are more emotionally intelligent and aware, can identify their feelings, and know healthy ways to manage their unpleasant feelings

 - Are able to cope with feeling (or being) alone from time to time without the constant need of another person to comfort them or meet their emotional needs

 - Are able to communicate clearly how they feel and what they need, like when they need another person’s support or emotional connection

 - Are able to see unhealthy or toxic relationship dynamics, how and when to set appropriate boundaries with those who are physically or emotionally unavailable, and know when to end a relationship

 - Don’t have a constant need for others’ attention, and they don’t feel the need to please at all times. Their identity is secure. They don’t need the approval of others to know who they are, that they belong.

 - Have worked through the pain or trauma of their own stories and are actively working to overcome any attachment wounds in their history

 - Have realistic and healthy expectations of others in relationships

So if these are some of the ways secure attachment looks in adulthood, let me give you some ideas of how to get there. This isn’t work you want to do on your own, though. Because attachment wounds are some of the hardest to move past. You’ll need someone to walk with you through it. The good news is that many people work through their past attachment history and trauma and are able to develop healthy, solid relationships with others as adults. It’s possible! It just takes a lot of awareness of how you interact with others and why and a desire to the hard work of changing unhealthy patterns.

Here are some ideas to get us started, ways to begin developing a more secure attachment:

 1. Learn how to effectively and appropriately manage unpleasant emotions.

 You’ll want to learn better self-care strategies and better coping skills, things like deep breathing and moving your body and things that calm you. You’ll also want to use accurate language to describe how you feel to be able to clearly communicate to others how you feel. You’ll want to be familiar with your triggers and what kind of situations are hardest for you and why. It’s about building emotional awareness here. I have some great questions you can use to help you start this process. You can find the Questions to Build Emotional Awareness at my website, [www.kerrahfabacher.com/resources](http://www.kerrahfabacher.com/resources).

 2. Actively work on your relationship with yourself.

 This looks like knowing how you think and feel about yourself, what you like and dislike, what you desire, what you need. It can be going back in you story to see when you began thinking and feeling about yourself the way you do today, what memories stand out. It’s about moving forward in healing from any past hurt, anything that has led you to feel negatively toward yourself. It’s about knowing yourself and learning how to love yourself.

 3. Heal from attachment wounds.

 Here’s again where a therapist can come in handy— he or she can help you work through the pain of any relational wounds you’ve had in your past. This is so important. You won’t be able to have healthy relationships today without healing from the unhealthy ones in your story.

 4. Learn what safety and trust looks like in relationships.

 Last week, I shared about Brene Brown’s video, *The Anatomy of Trust*, which is a great place to start. Most of her resources are honestly great places to start with this. I also have several episodes on safety in relationships I’ll link in the show notes to help you understand the kinds of relationships that are safe. It’s important to know this so you can clearly see when the opposite is happening. It’s hard to know safety and trust when you are struggling with insecure attachment styles leftover from hurt or neglect earlier in your life. So educate yourself. See what relationships around you feel safe, which people are there no matter what, which people are trustworthy and why. And then lean on those people for the support you need. Let them love you. Let me know you.

 5. Get out of unhealthy relationships if the patterns aren’t changing.

 Again, I have a couple episodes on this, too, that I’ll link for you. To build and maintain a secure attachment style in your relationships, you have to see the unhealthy stuff, to stop ignoring it or avoiding it. You have to face it head on and be brave. You have to communicate the yucky patterns and hurtful behaviors and set boundaries when needed. And you may have to walk away if it’s been too many years of hurt or neglect or if the person isn’t changing.

Pretty much everything I talk about on this podcast is a step toward more secure attachments in your life, ha! So I mean, that’s a shameless plug to listen each week, haha! I’ve thrown a lot at you today, but I truly hope this is a helpful place to start. I’m honestly thankful for the redemptive work of Jesus, how he has and continues to heal me from past wounds from people in my life, how he’s growing me and changing me. How he’s helping open may eyes to things today that I do and that others do that aren’t okay in relationships. How he’s with me every step of the way as the one who never leaves, who’s the most secure attachment available to me.

I’m thankful for the safe people in my life, too, how their unconditional love and support has given me the freedom to know and be known. How their actions have shown me they’re trustworthy and that they truly love me. I’m thankful the hurtful relationships of our past aren’t the end of the story, and I’m thankful for opportunities for better relationships today.

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Thanks for sitting a while with me. I trust that going on a journey toward more secure attachments will help you take a step toward wholeness so you can finally see what good relationships are made of.

To finish up, the transcript for this episode will be on the podcast page on my website, [kerrahfabacher.com](http://kerrahfabacher.com). If it’s not up yet, it will be soon! Also, don’t forget the links will all be right in the show notes of whatever podcast platform you use.

I’m so thankful for all my listeners! To help me continue making this show, would you consider becoming a monthly supporter? You can give as little as $99 a month or as much as $9.99 a month. Any amount helps me continue getting the show out to the world. You can visit [anchor.fm/beknown](http://anchor.fm/beknown) and click the button “support” for more information.

A big thanks to my friend Robert Hargrove for creating the music for the show, and fellow hope\*writer, Alana Dawson, for being a great editor.

Until next time friend, I’ll see you soon.

1. https://open.maricopa.edu/culturepsychology/chapter/attachment/#:~:text=Attachment%20refers%20to%20a%20deep,sharing%20experiences%20with%20close%20others. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.attachmentproject.com/blog/four-attachment-styles/#:~:text=There%20are%20four%20adult%20attachment,Secure [↑](#footnote-ref-2)