

This week let's take a break from "theory" and begin to take a look at the "practice" of re-parenting. The first 4 weeks of this course served the purpose of working toward building for you a framework for understanding your attachment style and why and how it was formed. From this 4-week investigation, hopefully, you have begun to see with a little more compassion that not many of us received the parenting that would encourage the development of a secure, internally loving relationship that is able to embrace all aspects of self, while also giving a loving limit. In fact, it has probably also highlighted for most of us that we don't even know what that means! What an excellent question to ask yourself ... what is a secure, internally loving relationship? What would it look, sound, and feel like to have an internally loving relationship? Until we have some understanding of this and some idea of how to work on that, reparenting can be an abstract thought with no idea of how to put that into practice. So, let's make that the focus for this week.

Let's first start with a brief breakdown of what happens in our adult relationships as a result of our insecure attachment style. As adults our particular attachment style affects everything from our choice of hobbies, our choice of careers, our partner selection, to how well our relationships progress, to how our relationships are sometimes not sustainable and end. As we have learned, an attachment pattern is established in early childhood attachments and continues to function as a working model for relationships into adulthood. This model of attachment influences how each of us reacts to our needs and how we go about getting them met. What happens time and time again, is that until we become aware of the patterns that are informing us, we will tend to find partners that confirm our internal and unaware model of attachment. Of course, this is not in unawareness. We have no idea that's what we're doing. But the truth is, if we grew up with an insecure attachment pattern, we will most often project or seek to duplicate similar patterns of relating as adults, even when these patterns hurt us and are not in our own self-interest. I love the metaphor given to me as a young mother. The psychologist I was consulting at the time, created a visualization for me that I relied on throughout the parenting of my own children, and has been a cornerstone of my own reparenting. What she said was, in creating our relationships we try to create the most beautiful home. But no matter how perfect the home is above ground, if there are cracks in the foundation than the beautiful home will be riddled with problems under-ground in a way that impacts the whole house.

All of you in this class are demonstrating that you share my commitment to dig into the dirt, find the cracks, fill them with the necessary mortar that can give your beautiful home the security it requires to maintain its structure.

Isn't it a relief to know that the attachment style you developed as a child doesn't have to define your ways of relating to those you love in your adult life? If you come to know your attachment style and what is informing it, you can then uncover ways you are defending yourself from getting close and being emotionally connected and work toward forming an "earned secure attachment"- an internally loving "right relationship."

As children, most of us learned to shut down our own feelings and needs in order to meet the needs of our parents. And some of us had our feelings overindulged and every single one of our needs was met by our parents, long past the time that it was appropriate to do so. Either way, the result was the same, an insecure attachment in which we are uncertain of our feelings, our needs, and how to lovingly meet those needs. As well as a development of belief systems that impact how we interact in our relationships.

Emotional Self-Regulation: the root of the practice

In all cases of insecure attachment, a practice for "emotional self-regulation" is a good first step to creating more internal security and right relationship. The definition of **Emotional Self-Regulation** as written is "the multifaceted process of initiating, inhibiting, and modulating the conscious aspects of **emotion** to effectively

achieve one's goals." In other words, when you are emotionally self-regulated you are able to name your feeling, determine what you need, and effectively meet that need through your own internal relationship, regardless of what is happening in the environment. Teaching taught me so much about encouraging a self-regulated internal connection. The techniques I used as a teacher with my students can also be used within each one of us as we work with our own young wounds.

1. **Name it to tame it:** In working with children I did constant work in naming feelings. I worked with children on the autism spectrum as well as kids who were demonstrating emotional difficulties. For all of my students, emotions could get very big and confusing really quickly. Chairs flying across the room, self-harm of pulling hair or hitting themselves, hitting or pushing other kids were often daily experiences. Self-regulation techniques were mandatory in maintaining safety in the room. I would often use the phrase "name it to tame it" with the kids. During the trigger, is not the time for processing. During the trigger, to simply name the feeling will most often quickly begin to dissipate the behavior. In your own reparenting, the same holds true. Triggers happen, triggers will always happen. What changes in re-parenting is that you will have a relationship with the trigger (perceived unmet need). When you get triggered, reach deep down, find the feeling, and name it.
2. **Name the feeling, don't behave it:** My students had to know that all feelings were ok to talk about, but the rule in my classroom was they couldn't use behavior for the feeling. If they used a behavior to express a feeling what they got from me was a firm limit. If a child is mad and throws a chair, the first thing to do is to make that stop. If a child is sad and sits and pouts, the pouting is named and given a limit. If a student is cheating at a game, the cheat is confronted, and bully behavior is named. If a student refuses to participate in an activity, the refusal is ignored, making sure that the student doesn't get a need met through being resistant. The examples could go on and on. Following the limit of the behavior, each of these examples can then go into the process of naming the feeling, and the child's real need. We all learn innumerable tactics/defenses to get our needs met, through the unawareness of how our feelings are informing us. And so, as adults who are re-parenting, we also are required to dive deeply into our interactions to see how it is that we are avoiding/suppressing/overindulging feelings in a way that feeds our insecure attachment. Before the feeling can be processed, the loving firm limit to the behavior is necessary. Notice, the word loving. It was imperative for the security of my students whom I loved very much for me to hold my love in a way they trusted at the same time as giving them a limit. Remember, that the insecure attachment was initially formed because mom and dad couldn't hold and communicate the object constancy of "I love you AND I am also mad/sad/disappointed. etc.".

3. **Think it, don't say it.** - Most of my students had difficulty with impulse control. And so, a feeling felt, was immediately behaved. And a thought in mind, was immediately blurted. Each of my students and we as adults often need the "pause button" as we investigate our feelings.

With my students I would walk kids through a series of instructions as I attempted to build in impulse control. Once I noticed they were triggered and the feeling was getting big, it would look something like this....

1. Take a breath
2. Feel your body, what is your body telling you.
3. Name that feeling
4. Now tell me what happened
5. What do you think that means about you?
6. Can you see that isn't true?
7. Name what you need

In my teaching career, I didn't add 5 and 6. But have added it here for you to all use in your practice. It is so very important for us to be continually digging for the belief systems that are impacting our internal connection as well as our daily interactions. When you walk yourself through the 7 points and compare that to the tactic of blurting/erupting, you can see how each one of us is robbed from ALL of the information about what is happening internally, therefore continuing to dismiss the wound that happened so long ago.

4. ABCD Model for trigger investigation: Lyndall often uses the ABCD technique for investigating a trigger. I wish I had known of this as a teacher. But here it is for all of you.

When you find yourself in a trigger you can use some of the above techniques to manage your way through it as it happens. But following the trigger, it is often helpful to process what happened so that you can bring what informed that trigger into awareness. The ABCD technique involves:

A- Name the adversity or activating event. The event will indicate an unmet need based on a dynamic from childhood.

B- What is your belief about the event. Or, what are you telling yourself this means about you or the other person, "I'm bad or he/she is bad."

C- What is the consequence of the event—this is the feeling you are having.

D- What is the defense you're using? The defense will be in one of the categories of fight, flight, freeze.

The purpose for using the ABCD is to gather enough information to be able to become aware of your feeling and unmet need and through your internal connection you then correct the incorrect belief system and broaden your capacity to recognize alternative explanations and solutions.

Exercises for this week

- Do a trigger journal.
- A trigger journal doesn't have to be a long expose. Rather, just write the bare facts so that you can work with the ABCD at a later time.
- The trigger journal can also give you important information regarding patterns of triggers, that will lead to awareness of belief systems you are holding.
- Practice feeling your body when you get activated.
- What sensations do you feel as it relates to feelings?
- Can you name the feeling?
- Can you name nuances to the feeling? Anger, irritation, annoyed, anxious, unsettled, scared, terrified happy, joyful, light, depressed, sluggish, heavy
- Once you know your feeling, can you identify what you need?
 - if you are anxious, what is your need?
 - if you are heavy, what is your need?
 - if you are lonely, what is your need?
- As you move through your day, work to recognize your patterns of:
 - Behaving your feeling, rather than naming your feeling
 - Blurting your thought, rather than pausing to investigate
 - Ignoring your feelings, and your body reaction to feelings.
- Focus on using some of the techniques as a beginning practice to being your own loving re-parent.