



Reach out
take a step

find hope



Care to change

Counseling to help you move forward.

Father Wounds

Presenters

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Specializes in Trauma, Anxiety, and Relationships



5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

This exercise helps bring the mind out of anxiety or overwhelm by focusing attention on the present moment through the senses, which signals the brain that you are safe right now. ❤️



5

things
you can
see



4

things
you can
touch



3

things
you can
hear



2

things
you can
smell



1

thing
you can
taste

Father Wounds

Objectives

- Explore the connection between early attachment, father relationships, and a child's view of God.
- Examine the ways father wounds shape faith identity and spiritual formation.
- Learn ministry-informed approaches for fostering secure attachment and healing.



Father Wounds

There's a Connection

- We are born craving and dependent on connection.
- Evidence shows a links to the craving that we are given for relationship with God.

Psalm 107:9

- We learn about the importance of relationship with God in the context of our first relationships.



Father Wounds

Attachment Theory

- The concepts of attachment theory
 - First major work by John Bowlby
 - Are my caregivers there for me?
 - Are they reliable?
 - Am I worthy of their responses?
 - Implicit Memory, Explicit Memory



Father Wounds

Attachment Theory

- Secure Home-Base Components
 - Secure home-base experience
 - Exploration
 - Attachment behavior
 - Proximity Seeking
 - Signaling
 - Safe Haven



Father Wounds

Attachment Theory

- Attachment Styles
 - Secure
 - Anxious
 - Avoidant
 - Fearful



● Secure Attachment

Low anxiety, feels safe with closeness and independence; trusts others and manages emotions well.



● Dismissive Avoidant

Prefers emotional distance, struggles with vulnerability, and values self-reliance.



● Anxious

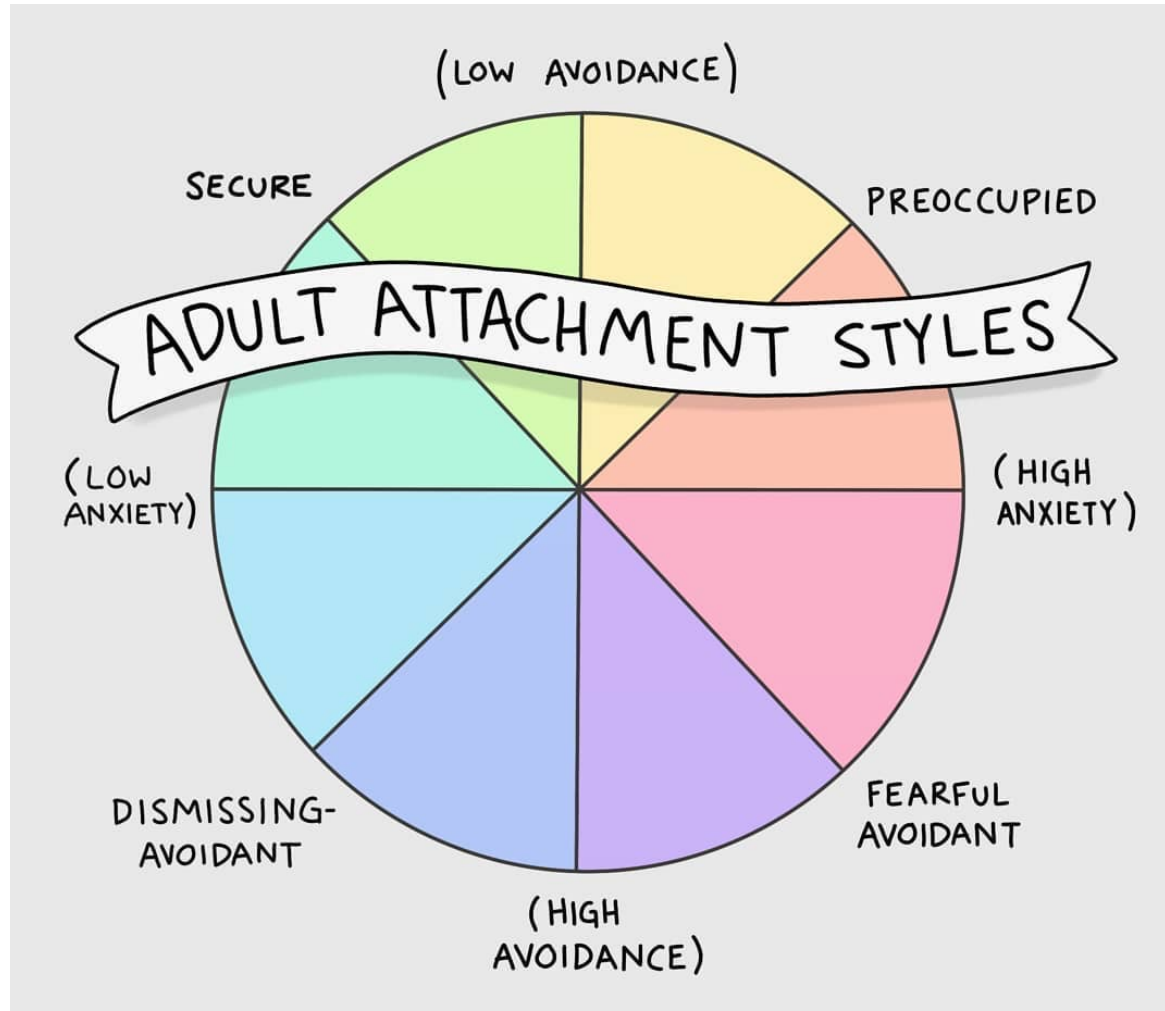
AKA Preoccupied Attachment. Craves closeness, worries about being rejected, and often seeks constant reassurance.



● Fearful Avoidant

AKA Disorganized Attachment. Fears and wants connection at the same time, often feeling confused or overwhelmed in relationships.





Father Wounds

What are Father Wounds?

- Emotional trauma caused by "father absenteeism."
- Portrays an absence of love.
- The extent of the experienced wound depends on the degree to which the child has bonded to their father.



Father Wounds

What are Father Wounds?

- Types of “Father Absenteeism”
 - Neglect
 - Absence – Divorce, separation, death
 - Abuse
 - Control
 - Withholding love



Father Wounds

How do Father Wounds Impact Core Beliefs?

- Children blame themselves.
- Developmentally, it is difficult for a child to understand that an adult could be wrong.
- They often explain it by blaming themselves... "It must be me", or "It's my fault."



Father Wounds

How do Core Beliefs Impact Functioning?

- Low Self-Esteem
- Difficulty setting boundaries
- Low mood or depression
- Feeling anxious and fearful
- Repression of emotions
- Lack of self-awareness



Father Wounds

How do Core Beliefs Impact Functioning?

- Anger and rage
- Low self-confidence
- Drawn to emotionally unstable partners
- Repeating negative parenting patterns
- Difficulty with relationships
- Difficulty with trust



Father Wounds

Father Wounds and God Attachment

- Securely Attached Individuals
 - See God as loving, forgiving, and trustworthy.
 - Often engage in consistent spiritual practices.



Father Wounds

Father Wounds and God Attachment

- Securely Attached Individuals
 - Carry a natural openness toward intimacy with the Divine.
 - Have realistic expectations of God, understanding that He doesn't protect us from all harm.



Father Wounds

Father Wounds and God Attachment

- Anxiously Attached Individuals
 - May be focused on pleasing God.
 - Are often concerned about appearances.



Father Wounds

Father Wounds and God Attachment

- Anxiously Attached Individuals
 - Experience great disappointment when they feel God doesn't bless them.
 - Sometimes feel close to God, but when they feel He is distant, they wonder what is wrong with them.



Father Wounds

Father Wounds and God Attachment

- Avoidantly Attached Individuals
 - Prefer self-reliance over surrender.
 - May avoid deep spiritual reflection or community.



Father Wounds

Father Wounds and God Attachment

- Avoidantly Attached Individuals
 - Often minimize or dismiss the need for spiritual connection.
 - May focus more on their duty as a Christian than on their relationship with God.



Father Wounds

Father Wounds and God Attachment

- Fearfully Attached Individuals
 - Closeness feels unsafe.
 - Attributes chaos to Him.



Father Wounds

Father Wounds and God Attachment

- Fearfully Attached Individuals
 - May desire to feel close, but feels “gun-shy” towards Him.
 - As soon as promises feel unfulfilled, they go back into isolation.



Father Wounds and Attachment

A Testimony.....



Attaching to God

Healing is Possible

Learning to attach to God strengthens the way we can experience Him and leads to health in other relationships.

Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior. Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. Teach me your way, LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors. - Psalms 27:9-11



Attaching to God

God as our Attachment Figure

- We need to experience connection in the Four Pillars of Attachment
 - Proximity Seeking
 - Safe Haven
 - Secure Base
 - Grief over loss or abandonment



Attaching to God

God as our Attachment Figure

- **Proximity Seeking** - Believing we can seek to restore closeness, when feeling separated from God.
 - Involves reciprocity, with the purpose of intimacy, comfort, and hearing His direction, and close accessibility.
 - Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. James 4:8
 - Jeremiah 29:13, Hebrews 10:22, Psalm 145:18



Attaching to God

God as our Attachment Figure

- Proximity Seeking
- **Safe Haven** – God as our sanctuary from the chaos, stress, and pain of life.
 - Examples include turning to prayer and devotion when emotionally distressed, in order to feel safe in our life.
 - God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
Psalm 46:1
 - Psalm 91:1-4, Psalm 32:7, Psalm 57:1, 1 Peter 5:7



Attaching to God

God as our Attachment Figure

- Proximity Seeking
- Safe Haven
- **Secure Base** – Contentment and security with God in the here and now, with assurances of future challenges, that allow us to explore the world around us.
- Do we view our relationship as with a stronger, wiser, nonphysical deity of eternal security and foundations of righteousness and justice.



Attaching to God

God as our Attachment Figure

- Proximity Seeking
- Safe Haven
- **Secure Base** –
 - Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9
 - Psalm 37:5, Isaiah 26:3-4, Psalm 62:6-8



Attaching to God

God as our Attachment Figure

- Proximity Seeking
- Safe Haven
- Secure Base
- **Grief over loss or abandonment** – knowing that God will not abandon you in your sin or doubt and would never forsake you.
 - *Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. Hebrews 13:5*
 - Deuteronomy 31:6, Jeremiah 29:11



Attaching to God

Let's Evaluate Together

How have you been able to connect with God in these four pillars of attachment?



Attaching to God

Barriers

- He is invisible.
- Our sin and sense of shame.
- Things that we use to take His place (idols) and ease our emotional distress.
- Not ever knowing authentic affection.



Attaching to God

Barriers

- Projecting our earthly father's personality and behaviors on Him.
- Presumptions about abandonment.
- Religion over relationship.
- Distrust



Attaching to God

Barriers

God created us in his image, and we
decided to return the favor.

- George Bernard Shaw



Attaching to God

Healing is possible

- You are not beyond His reach.
(Isaiah 61)
- "Some of the most courageous people in the world are those who have looked at the face of hell in their own hearts and have trusted God to heal them, cleanse them, and give them something to live for." - God Attachment



Attaching to God

Steps

1. Envelop your heart and mind around the grace of God and how you are His child.
2. Learn about your attachment style and begin making new, healthy choices in your relationship with God.
3. Step into the past and invite Jesus into these wounds.



Attaching to God

Steps

4. Reframe the meaning of our stories of wounds to ones that glorify God.
5. Build and experience God through spiritual disciplines.



Father Wounds

Steps To Attaching to God

- Spiritual Disciples for Connection
 - Bible Study
 - Prayer
 - Silence and solitude
 - Service
 - Community



Attaching to God

From Anxious to Secure Attachment

- Embrace God's grace.
- Stop expecting good results from efforts to get everyone's approval.
- Explore with a trusted, secure friend Set clear boundaries
- Recognize your motives to serve
To feel loved → Out of love



Attaching to God

Avoidant to Secure Attachment

- Avoid Isolation.
- Rest in God's capability.
- Notice fixation on flaws – choose acceptance and connection.



Attaching to God

Avoidant to Secure Attachment

- Increase Awareness of emotions, beyond anger
- Learn how to open up with a trusted source.
- Ask a friend to pursue you when you seem distant.



Attaching to God

Fearful to Secure Attachment

- Admit that even though you reach for others, your fear and distrust may push them away.
- Find a companion who can be patient and honest with you.
- Face your deepest wounds, not suppress them.
- Increase your awareness of your feelings and use them to manage impulses to quit relationships.



Father Wounds

Embrace the Father

- Accept yourself as a Child of God
 - I am accepted
 - I am chosen
 - I am loved
 - I am God's creation
 - I am precious in His sight
 - I am forgiven
 - I have been redeemed



Q & A



Care
to change

SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS!



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Care to change

Resources

- Care to Change Podcast: From Isolation to Connection: Strategies for Building Meaningful Relationships, February 24, 2025, Season 8, Episode 8
- Care to Change website resource page
- The Attachment Project – attachmentproject.com
- Atlas of the Heart – Brene Brown



References

- A Wound From My Father, Dr. Rosnell Simmons
- Agape Healing International, Alfred C.W. Davis
- God Attachment by Dr. Tim Clinton, Dr. Joshua Straub
- Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications by Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver



Call to Action

Let's connect!

- Listen to our podcast
- Host a community forum or a lunch & learn for your staff/ small group leaders
- Sponsor families in need
- Email us at help@caretochange.org



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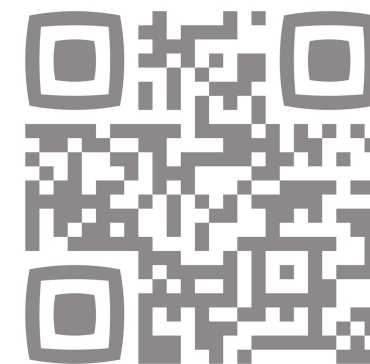
Schedule an
appointment



Our Services



Our Team



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Reach out
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Care to change

Counseling to help you move forward.