

Week Three:

Grounding.

I've had a real challenge in figuring out how to pull together our last class. Last week I ran out of time.... And you sent me some excellent questions that I want to answer.

As you have probably realized- you were sent a copy of my personal notes along with the link to the last 2 classes. This has given me the idea that I will first respond to your questions and quickly touch base on some of the things I didn't finish talking about last week.

Then transition into Living from the Heart of God without Weaponizing Truth if we have time. Unfortunately, I know I will not finish up on what I want to share, but I will get together another transcript. I will capture for you what we go over now, and also include my desired content for this 3rd class which we won't have time for.

So, first I will go to the questions sent my way. I want for what I share to be much more than 'information', but to be practically helpful as we live life. So, I appreciate the questions which give me an open door to make the material applicable to life- especially as we pursue understanding the wounded! Which includes all of us!

Comment from Hyon- I love seeing grieving as acknowledging our own worth. Could you explain more how we can engage in healthy grieving?

Grieving takes emotional capacity! Grief will take us into all the uncomfortable emotions and sensations of sadness, anger, powerlessness, despair, guilt.... If I have not developed the ability to be in these emotions and remain relationally stable (without imploding or exploding) – then not able to grieve well.

I have written some blogs regarding practical ways we can develop emotional capacity. Find them on my website. Maribethpoole.com

One of you asked a question regarding how all this information plays out within different cultures. This is actually a very insightful question and has important implications. I suspect that every community, family, institution, denomination, culture – (including our mission!) has an overriding and a basic ‘default’ attachment patterns. And then, Just like within any ‘family system’ or within an individual- there can be variations and situational shifts. And our specific wounds have an impact on what kind of ‘groups’ each of us gravitates towards.

Over simplification! And I am aware that my following comments are from my own personal and limited understanding. Take them as you wish and feel free to disagree.

ie. Charismatic denominations have high energy default systems- with an emphasis on roping in ‘anxiety’. They gravitate to more emotional type experiences that will ‘fix’ the problem and ‘clinging’ to God with an urgency for Him to prove His love and involvement- thus bringing a sense of increased safety. ‘Evangelical’ denominations (like our mission) tend to gravitate more towards a dismissive attachment pattern. Minimizing the undercurrent of significant pain and confusion. They feel more comfortable if strict guidelines can be followed, giving a sense of life being manageable if we follow the rules. And there are some that have a blend of ‘just enough prophetic encouragement’ along with set ‘rules/ god laws’ to follow and they go back and forth to keep individuals living in a way that pulls them into a seeming ‘window of tolerance’ when life gets overly hard and ‘rules of godliness’ to follow. {I know I am over simplifying and do not have time to flesh out my thinking. So, please take these seeds of thought and puzzle it out more for yourselves.)

I believe having self-awareness as an organization and our cultural attachment pattern, and within each of us individually, will impact how we can go forward with healing and repair.

- **As a toddler - how can we remember if our parents were in tune with how we felt? Childhood memories are often sketchy. Sometimes only a few things stand out in our memory of our childhood.** **Someone gave a response.** Perhaps what happens is less the actual memory but more the mapping of the nervous system that “remembers.” It isn’t the memories per se that are shaping but the events that wire one with certain impressions. I like this response. **Our body’s keep the score (Bessel van der Kolk’s book with this title is excellent!) even when our cognitive memory system may not have logged the event. Our poly vagal systems are being set and conditioned regardless of how much cognitive memory we have.**

- **How much of these attachment patterns are environmental/parenting vs. biological (something innately in the child)? In my family, I tried to provide the secure environment, but it seems each of my children responded differently.**

You are capturing the on-going debate of ‘nature vs. nurture’. My perspective is that there is a Blend! Analogy of the creation of pottery. The texture of the clay will make the difference!! Absolutely! And also - the kind of pressure and ‘forming’ of the clay by the potter is also just as much of a determining factor as to how a piece of pottery turns out. Nature and nurture are both involved.

- **How do attachment styles map across to personality disorders? Let me first name a few personality disorders so as to bring all of us into the same wave length, These are emotional and mental patterns within a person that determine how they live in a relational world.**

Borderline, Bi-polar Disorder, Narcissistic Personality, Anti- social, Paranoid, Obsessive – compulsive are some.

There is a strong correlation to these categories and attachment patterns! These names are labels given with definitions/ symptoms and descriptions. They can help us move towards some understanding and what we might expect and encounter as we relate with different people. But the labels in the DSM do **not** help with the understanding of what might cause these internal struggles. All of them can be traced to insecure attachment patterns and adaptive defense strategies in the nervous system- they are

ways to navigate/ avoid the dangers (real and perceived) if one's relational world is unsafe. If we stop with the 'labels', we easily minimize our compassion by 'putting a person in a category' and keep them at a distance, when what they need is a secure attachment!

- **What if a secure attachment is interrupted at any time during the growing up years - for me I'm relating that to starting boarding school in Year 7 and normal communication wasn't available - so, I guess my safe secure person could not always or rarely be reached when needed. Yes. The secure/ safe bond was lost and absent. Instead there was a lack of safety. And this was chronic for a lengthy period of time. Disconnection can be devastating, especially during the formative developmental years of life. This disruption of a safe home base and haven would have profound impact.**
- **if a person did not receive what was needed for secure attachment in childhood, will providing these things in adulthood help them to wholeness? Or is some other intervention needed? There may be other interventions needed. The earlier the trauma and loss of a safe/ secure consistent bond... the ongoing length of this environment [Type A trauma] along with Type B traumas in the mix- increases the challenge in ones' pursuit of healing. This is considered Chronic Post Traumatic Stress. Some possibly helpful interventions are Cognitive Behavioral approach?? {My opinion is that it will be marginally helpful} Somatic approaches. [DARE] Dynamic Attachment Repatterning Experience and with therapists who understand the power of attachment and EMDR with a well trained practitioner . BUT ALSO, in addition to needed interventions, the need for secure/ safe relationships are needed!**

There are some other questions that I will get to, but....

This next question will bump us back into the material where we left off last week. Feel free to go to my teaching notes that were sent your way the end of last week.

- How do I help a person with disorganized attachment come to healing?
- I am going to touch on this pattern and all the others.

Personal Goal for all patterns: to grow towards an Increasingly Secure Attachment Pattern.

(# 1 thing needed)

What is needed for Repair:

*** Understand your life story and how it impacts how you are today.

SELF AWARENESS & REFLECTION is the most powerful way towards a Secure Attachment. (the more we focus on our own healing and maturity, it will flow out to others. Like in the Serenity prayer, It is vital that we keep our focus primarily on our own lives- the arena of life that we have the most power to affect.)

For all of the insecure patterns, we can use purposeful mindsight, self awareness, managing our breathing, paying attention and using each of our five senses. We need to develop increasing capacity to be in emotions while staying relationally regulated. We will adjust these growing abilities to our specific defensive modes.

We need to grow in our ability to recognize our worth and use our emotions as teachers of what went wrong and what we appropriately need.

We need to grow in our ability to get back to a place of calm while not squashing our emotions. And to be able to relate with others in ways that are helpful to all.

Dismissive Attachment Pattern:

1. It is important for the person to recognize that everything matters!
Activate your nervous system, using the 5 senses.
2. Make mountains out of mole hills. In your own life as well in the lives of others. Use Mindfulness practice. Self awareness- for the purpose of increasing awareness of one's preferences, hurts and delight and value.
3. Explore ways you can 'break the rules'. Push the limits of 'traditions and rigid comfort zones. Color outside the lines.
4. Develop increased emotional capacity so as to attune and stay connected with what matters regarding self and others.
5. Grow in your experience that relationships are more important than rules.

Distracted/ Anxious / Pre-occupied Attachment Pattern:

1. It is important to learn how to **get back to a place of internal calm** when upset. Using the 5 senses can be helpful.
2. Deep breathing.
3. Mindfulness practices for the purpose of getting one's self back to calm.
4. **Develop increased emotional capacity** so as to be able to stay relationally regulated and kindly present during one's own hard times as well as others.
5. Settling self through experiencing appreciation.

Disorganized Attachment Pattern:

These people **will need a stable, constant, mature person to walk life's journey with them for the long haul. They need a person to help them through co- regulation over and over... so that their nervous systems can begin to learn how to do it on their own.**

They will need to develop many brain skills. Four important ones are

1. Mindfulness . – so as to become more grounded
2. Regaining Calm.
3. Building joy vs. fear tracking.
4. Develop increased emotional capacity.

If we are able to understand these dynamics, hopefully we will develop an increased sense of compassion for ourselves and those with whom we are in relationship with.

And we can grow in our ability to relate in ways that will be helpful.

For more thoughts on how this... Refer you to the transcript of notes for last week that I did not get to.

[How we can fit into another's journey toward repair:

Those who live out of a **dismissive attachment** will benefit if we slow down a conversation, bringing attention to something that is happening and ask questions, giving opportunity for reflection and awareness of how life matters and how they are impacted by life matters. The person and what they experience matters!

Those who live out of a **distracted/ anxious attachment** will benefit if we tune into the inner turmoil and then gently relate in ways that can help them move towards a sense of inner calm and confidence. Let them know they are seen/ heard/ understood/ and have a someone on the journey with them.

Those who live out of a **disorganized attachment** will benefit from relationships that remain steady, consistent, calm and attentive while tuning into their inner turmoil, fear, chaos, and shut down/ withdrawal. At times the person needs validation that what they are going through is very important. At times they will need help in getting out of their internal chaos and back to a place of calm.]

It important to understand how this plays out in relationships. It impacts every interaction and relationship that we have!

Attachment dance steps occur in our daily lives with everyone we come on contact with..... Thus, the importance of understanding the Attachment Dance steps in relationships. Our poly vagal systems go on high alert -(or stay on high alert even when there is not a need to be) for anything that is off kilter and may be 'unsafe'. And this plays out in how relational dances go. Pick a relationship- the one you have with your spouse or in a friendship to make sense of this.

Due to time, again- this is an over simplification. And I will only touch on one of the 'dances' in the attachment spectrum.

Let's consider an attachment dance when one party is dismissive Person A- and they are in a relationship with someone who is anxious- who we will call Person B . Person B will get emotionally energized and ramped up in ways they hope will get Person A to pay attention and care.... But it generally backfires. They are experienced as overwhelming to (the dismissive) person A. Person A is uncomfortable with big emotions. Person A developed a 'shut down' posture, a stance of withdrawal, and a determination to not be aware of when things are bad. So the 'Anxious' person Person B is experienced as a threat to be withdrawn from. Person A continues to pull back resulting in Person B trying

harder and 'bigger' to get a connection. CYCLE continues and escalates while both are defensively trying to feel safe in conflictual patterns. Tragic!

This plays out within all relationships.... Including the dance steps within communities... Including how it plays out within mission organizations.

Due to time, we will shift our focus again and I want you to **RECALL** The summary I gave regarding what is needed to form a secure attachment and to pursue an earned secure attachment. **I AM GOING TO BRING ATTENTION TO A FEW OF THE POINTS THAT ARE GOING TO BE EXTRA CHALLENGES BETWEEN THE SIM 'LEADERSHIP'/ PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN WHEN PURSUING RESTORATION.** (#'s 1 – 5 and 6). And I am aware that I am going to be talking from the perspective and slant of one of the adult MK's who was hurt and had a lot to sort through.

Summary:

What is needed to develop a secure bond/ attachment?

[Initially and to grow an 'earned secure attachment ability/ relationships]

Needed not only for adult MK's who were hurt!

Great implications as to what is needed to prevent trauma as well as in relating in ways that **enhance restoration**, healing, and repair in relationships!

When these things do not happen currently, there is a polyvagal response due to triggering/ tapping into familiar patterns in our childhood where similar dynamics set us up for being harmed. The ones I am going to focus on are: Lack of communication. Silence. Disconnection.... This is going to be a big challenge to address since there are so many varied and moving parts in an organization that hinder these things from happening easily. I can see the problem, but know that I do not have all the puzzle pieces that cause it to be hard to overcome! So I am presenting the problem

and challenge here. Not claiming to be easily throwing a simplistic solution. What I share is only a 'conversation starter'!

- 1- Attunement on a regular basis Synchronization. Having a sense of being truly seen and heard and understood! Feeling felt.
- 2- Responsiveness Caregiver was and is needed to be consistently Present and available when needed over time. Not a one-time response or interaction. Like I said above- Silence and lack of communication will be very familiar to times when in earlier years there was a lack of being heard and responded to. A lack of a safe connection. This contributed to default poly vagal stances. Throughout all individuals involved in the trauma arena- poly vagal systems will be on 'high alert'. Knowing and understanding that these defensive adaptations are involved might help as efforts of ongoing communication continue. This is part of what I am referring to in #3

3- On-going Engagement

4. The need to Regulate Affect through Interactive Co-regulation. This will result in a person developing the ability for self-regulation. Remember how I have stated that what ever happens in the main caretaker gets biochemically reproduced in the child? When a child has the parental figure join them in their upset and help then get back to calm, their nervous system is developing wiring so as to eventually be able to do it themselves.

It will not work to quickly expect the 'upset'/ dysregulated adult MK's to be able to regulate their emotions on their own. We were not in an environment as children where we could develop the ability to do so. This is one of the impacts of trauma

{to the degree these ingredients above are met- a person feels seen/ heard/ validated in how they would have experienced what happened to them... and when this happens they can better experience being valued and receive comfort}. Then there can be more of a chance of going forward in restoration. In individual healing as well as Repair between the different parties involved.

5. My 5th point is in regards to Parental Emotional Strength I am including this here so as to take us to a greater implication. Children are harmed when they had to be strong and 'put together' for the sake of the 'parent figure'. What they needed was for the 'big person' to be their Competent, Wise, Gentle Protector and Advocate. They needed the 'parental figures' and 'big people' to step in and call the perpetrators onto the carpet and make them stop the harm they were inflicting. The children needed to get the message that they were valuable enough to be protected and did not have to own the shame for what happened to them. Messages of shame needed to be appropriately assigned rather than wrongly interpreted and intertwined into the child's perception of them self.

This need will continue to be tapped into as restorative steps are explored for the future.

AGAIN- I am not wanting to communicate that there are quick and easy steps forward. It will be messy and complex. I do hope that these thoughts of mine can be helpful as each one of us move towards ...

6. Repair

I want to jump back to some other questions sent my way.

- Where do we draw the line between understandable reactionary living and sinful behavior?

- **another comment that goes along with this:** I think of those things as sinful, yet they seem to have come from the lack in my growing years. Where do we draw the line?

Some emotional detachment in childhood and through adolescence caused me to live in a way that was self-centered and self-seeking. I think of those things as sinful, yet they seem to have come from the lack in my growing years. Where do we draw the line between understandable reactionary living and sinful behavior?

I don't think we can easily 'draw a clear and straight line'. It is messy and tangled!

There are 3 Different words for 'sin' in the Hebrew Scripture: { Jim Wilder has an insightful series of approximately 15 teachings on this. I am not certain where you can go to find them. Possibly contact Life Model Works. Or go to the Deeper Walk website.}

The 3 different words:

"Sin"- when we try to hit the mark, but miss the target or bullseye and fall short.

"Transgression"- referring to acts coming from a deliberately defiant and rebellious heart.

"Infirmity"- when a person has some kind of deformity/ handicap that hinders them from living well. **** This would include the affects of trauma.

We need a right diagnosis. For example: Is a stomach ache due to eating too much or appendicitis? The plan ahead needs to be based on the right diagnosis. It is unwise and unhelpful to lump all categories into one.

We need to grow in our understanding and discernment. This will make a difference in how we will relate with people.

Again I am reminded that what is most important is SELF awareness. How might my own attachment pattern and defensive poly vagal stances play into any urges I have in my desire to respond to another person? It is more important for me to primarily focus

on myself rather than quickly placing judgement (including a generalized diagnosis of 'sin') on another.... And ask for God's discernment. And walk humbly- love mercy

Remember that Jesus came not to condemn, but to save. To join people on their paths, bringing help and salvation- not only 'salvation' in the sense of getting people into heaven. He was willing to get down and dirty rather than insisting on people being 'sterile and clean'. He took all 'sin, transgressions and infirmities' into Himself on the cross. His love is big enough that He cares and wants salvation for all, including this side of the transition door. It is overly easy for me to slide into some condemnation. Taking the role of 'judge and jury' lurks inside of me. So- I must be careful to not take on any of the 'judgement' role. I do want to increase in discernment and insight. But I want to primarily be careful of the huge logs that slip into my eyes, preventing me from seeing and advancing appropriately and with wisdom.

- How do we incorporate this into discipleship?

I want to keep in mind that some of us will have 'poly vagal systems' that have no desire to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus is associated with a God that 'rubber stamped' our being abandoned and disconnected from any chance of safety and true love. Why would we want to become subservient and submissive to a 'god' who is behind trauma?!! Why follow a mean and uncaring God?? I do not want to push an agenda of discipleship on people who have unhealed trauma.

I want to bring the focus back to the overriding purpose of our classes- of being trauma informed. Understanding the Wounding in Our Lives: *Expanding Our Perspective While Healing Our Wounded Souls*. I think that a crucial aspect of being a Disciple of Jesus will include a desire and intentionality to be learning what it would look like for Jesus to be interacting with the Missionary Kids who have been hurt by 'religious' topics. Topics and issues like Sin, confession, repentance, forgiveness,

obedience. (The topics in what I was planning for our 3rd class.). How would He be interacting in ways to compassionately untangle the wrong done and bring healing accuracy to what He actually had in mind. Part of our specific discipleship will include NOT having interactions that keep the same trajectory going!

- Let's keep thinking on this very important question! Here are some more of my thoughts- as I have processed my own desires and journey of healing. This is for those of us who do want to be disciples. Discipleship programs most often focus on the behavior level of 'obedience' – encouraging Bible study, memorization, prayer plans, and evangelism. My experience is that they most often miss exploring what is happening at the level of our souls and quality of having a safe/ secure / enjoyable/ confident bond with God.
- **The parable Jesus gave regarding whether or not a building would stay firm when a storm hits comes to mind. If built on a firm foundation- then one's life will not wiped out. Battered but not destroyed. If built on sand- then the building will be wiped out. Jesus goes on to say that to have a firm foundation – do what Jesus recommends. Jesus is very smart! His ideas are great and it is wise to follow Him...!!! Life will turn out better!**

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But Jesus also incorporates in His teaching a strong focus on what happens at the level of the soul. The need to wash the inside of the cup which will result in the outside being cleaned as well.

I find it helpful to think about discipleship at both levels of living. The perception (cognitive and rational level) which includes our / behaviors. And also at the level of the autonomic nervous system.

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There is definitely a place of 'behavioral obedience'. Do what the wise Rabbi says! Follow His example!

But I have a caution. It might be coming from a place of self-sufficiency/ legalism. Not out of a relationship that is INTER- dependent with God.

Or our obedience may come from a fear basis, not experientially knowing the character of God as one that is loving and kind. It is vital that we consider what kind of connection/ attachment we have as we follow Him.

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I may be able to 'override' my internal angst and 'obey', but personally, I want to do whatever I can to become the kind of person that easily and spontaneously does what Jesus says. And live like He did. I want it come to come naturally. I want to increasingly live with an easy engagement in life rather than fighting my reactions that come from past hurts. That it is just 'my norm' for me to do what is right, to love mercy and walk humbly.

Wouldn't it be better if it comes from a connection with God and being fueled by His grace?!! At the deeper levels within, am I following Him out of a confidence that as I follow and do what Jesus says, I am being wisely guided into paths of righteousness. Paths forward that will set things right? Then I can better resonate with the song "Trust and Obey. There is no other way to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey.' I want to have my 'broken trustee' fixed when it comes to knowing what Jesus is really like! And follow God on this basis.

So- When I am having trouble with 'discipleship' - with following the Rabi's example or trainings- then I want to look at what is happening within me at the Polyvagal Level- that is making it hard so that I live reactively rather than free to engage without fear. Being a disciple will then include my finding disciplines (which might include bible study, memorization, prayer and many other creative things) I can engage in that will put me into an 'environment' in which God will pour His grace- and bring healing that changes me from the inside out. Shift from 'legalism'/ self effort to experiencing more and more a connection/ an earned secure attachment with God so that some wonderful and safe 'fruit of the Spirit' will blossom and be enjoyably available to others around me.