

**JJ**

Welcome to Not Your Ordinary Parts, a podcast where we talk about hard things associated with the human experience with the goal of increasing awareness, growth, and healing. You may hear information from professionally licensed therapists, life coaches, healers, doctors, etc. This information is not medical advice or therapy, and is not meant to replace actual therapy or instructions given by a doctor or personal therapist. I'm your host, Jalon Johnson. My guest today is Dr. Diane Poole-Heller. Dr. Heller is a world-renowned expert in attachment theory, trauma healing, and relational transformation. Over the past four decades, she has been at the forefront of understanding how early attachment experiences shape the way we love, connect, and navigate relationships, and more importantly, how we can heal and rewire these patterns at any stage of life. As an internationally recognized speaker, author, and clinical trainer, Dr. Heller has worked thousands of therapists and millions of individuals to bridge the gap between trauma, attachment, and the path to secure fulfilling relationships. She is the creator of Dynamic Attachment Repatterning Experience, an innovative therapeutic model that has transformed the way we approach healing from insecure attachment. Her book, *The Power of Attachment*, delves into the unseen forces that drive our relationships, revealing why we connect the way we do, why love sometimes feels so out of reach, and most importantly, how we can move toward lasting emotional security.

Through her work, Dr. Heller has helped people untangle the unconscious patterns that keep them stuck in cycles of fear, avoidance, and self-protection, empowering them to move toward deeper intimacy, trust, and connection. She has spent decades proving that attachment wounds don't have to define us and that healing is always within reach. Whether through her books, her clinical work, or her teachings, Dr. Heller is giving people the tools to break free from the past and rebuild relationships that feel safe, secure, and fulfilling. So Dr. Heller, welcome to the show, and thank you so much for being my guest.

**DPH**

It's a privilege to be here. Thank you, Jalon. I'm really glad we're together doing this today.

**JJ**

Thank you. And also, I gave a bit of an introduction, but so that the audience can get to know you a little bit better. Would you mind giving us a little bit of background about yourself and how you got to who and where you are today, please?

**DPH**

Well, I started out as a child in Pennsylvania, where you are, which is cool. I had a challenging upbringing. I think in dealing with that, learning the human journey that a lot of us are on, it's not so easy sometimes. In the process of trying to heal from that, I learned a lot about trauma and learned a lot about recovery and got help along the way. Then just felt like it was just too, gosh, darn hard to get through trauma, what was available way back when I was doing this in the early '80s. I just felt like, jeez, it needs to be easier. I got into a maniacal focus on how do you heal trauma and how do you recover from extreme life events, including violence and other kinds of difficulties. Got on a mission, I guess, to help people recover. Peter Levine was one of my mentors. He created Somatic Experiencing, so I got to get treatment from him a lot because we live in the same state at the time. I also studied with him and taught with him. I'm still teaching with him. We still teach together. But I was assisting him and teaching a lot with him, helping him a lot with what he was doing, creating his training program, that thing for about 25 years.

Now we're on going on 40 years. We started teaching together a lot online. We do that once or twice a year now because I'm really trying to create a really great legacy for him and also get that work out. Then also my attachment work is my own thing in terms of taking a deep dive in that because Somatic Experiencing is great, I think they're a marriage made in heaven, but it's a lot about regulating the nervous system and very physiological, and it covers a lot of things. It's a huge body of work. I felt like more needed to be said about relationship because so often people can recover from trauma triggers and difficult symptoms and all of that. But a lot of what remains for a lot of people is difficulty connecting to their real authentic self and also connecting to other people. One of the psychologists, and I'm trying to remember his first name, his last name is Lipton. It's not Bruce Lipton. It's a different Lipton. He said that the shortest definition for trauma is broken connection. I'm really trying to help people heal connection because it's so important to us as humans.

**JJ**

Wow. Thank you for that. I think when you think about connections, I don't know if a lot of us think about a connection internally or with ourselves. I think that's a big one that trauma can cause, and it can create that insecurity. So broken connections with others and ourselves can be building on that definition of trauma.

**DPH**

I think it's been an important focus, and I think it adds to the depth of healing that people are capable of. I think we're designed to heal. Even with attachment injury or how a trauma later even impacts our ability to connect, like you said, to our self and to other people, there is a great

potential for healing. The message has a lot of hope in it and a lot of practical, experiential kinds of things we can do and practices we can do and capacities we can regain if they were disrupted by trauma or attachment injury.

**JJ**

You are well-versed in all this, right? Let's say someone's listening, and maybe for the first time they're hearing about trauma or attachment injuries or somatic this or the nervous system. How would you define trauma and what it does to the body?

**DPH**

Well, you can think of another short definition for trauma as too much, too soon, too fast. Now, sometimes things happen too slow, like gas poisoning that you're not aware of is happening. That's happening too slow that threat response doesn't even go on. But generally speaking, it's too much coming at you that you can't integrate, you can't, in a resilient way, cope with, like a car speeding at you and you're going to have a car crash or something like that. Or a violent attack that you aren't strong enough to avoid, something like that. It's just too much overwhelming our ability to defend ourselves or protect ourselves or even process the arousal that's coming when we're scared or the stimulus. It's like too much stimulus for your nervous system to manage. You can think of our nervous system a little bit like our metabolism. You know how like at Thanksgiving or a holiday, you over eat, maybe? If you're like me. Then you're like, Oh, my gosh, I clogged up my whole system. I can't even move. I want to go to sleep. I got to walk it off. It's a little bit like that. Our nervous systems are designed to digest stimulus and to manage threat and to manage all these things, but there can be too much.

When there's too much, trauma tends to stop time. We tend to get disconnected right before the worst moment of something happening or right at the moment something happens. Even if rescue happens the next moment because we disconnected, we don't see the resolution. So we stay stuck in the anxiety or the dissociation or the disconnection or the anger or whatever might have been going on when we've been trying to confront threat. Physiologically, we tend to not feel safe. Sometimes Sometimes if it's extreme, we can even feel like an electrical charge in our body. So our body doesn't feel like a safe place to go. So then we become disembodied or disconnected. We don't get our physical cues about things that we need to survive. It can have a lot of physical aspects to it. If there's too much arousal on the sympathetic nervous system, which is hyper arousal, we can have symptoms of anger outbursts or panic attacks or super fast heart rate or fast thinking, so that we just are out of sync with ourselves. Likewise, if we get too much parasympathetic nervous system activation, where it goes past the relaxation response

it's designed to do, it can take us into shutdown or dissociation or depression or lethargy or feeling dead or even having digestive problems.

Because our threat response is designed to be relatively short-lived, and when it gets stuck on, then over time, we can have some symptoms that start to show up. That's an important thing to understand about. Our body is trying to tell us something, and our body has a capacity to heal. If we can reduce the arousal and work with it bit by bit and pace it and dose it in a way that we can integrate it and alternate between something that's scary or giving us a lot of anger or fear or whatever, and then alternate that with a resource that helps us neutralize it a little bit or have a contradictory experience to what was scary, like actually have a need met that wasn't met in the original scenario, or maybe we were alone, but this time with a therapist or with a friend or we have somebody with us, so we're not dealing with it alone. A lot of different things can help us mitigate the excess of scariness that happened to us. We can actually digest it like eating your normal three meals a day instead of eating all your three meals a day at once.

Your nervous system can manage it if it's presented in a reasonable amount. That's a big thing of what we're doing when we're working with someone in a session or I'm working with a friend is try to help reduce it into baby steps or small chunks so we can actually integrate the experience instead of fragment or disconnect or get emotionally volatile or upset or difficult symptoms.

**JJ**

Thank you so much for that. I want to circle back to something you said because... And I always try to think about the person who's hearing this for the first time, who has no idea that they've even experienced trauma because it's just their normal, right? And they may hear something and go, wait, that sounds like something that I feel or something that I experience. But I wasn't in a plane crash or a bad car accident or something like that. So how is that affecting me? You said we may feel like our body is not a safe place to go. So where else will we be? How would we break that down to someone who doesn't understand that you may be disembodied or not in your body?

**DPH**

Yeah. One symptom of that is accident proneness. You bump into things. Your boundaries aren't working, so you know where the door is. Or when you're getting in a car, you hit your head, I've had that happen when I've been into my trauma experience more than my regular experience. There can be a clumsiness or just not even being awkward or uncoordinated. Another symptom

of unresolved trauma is not being able to orient. I'm very GPS dependent, getting lost easily, not being able to figure, Where am I? North, South, East, West? There's this disorientation, is another symptom of trauma being in charge instead of your regular sense about being able to orient in time and space. Or losing words and losing time can be aspects of unresolved trauma, too.

**JJ**

I heard it said that trauma can cause you to live in your head. Can you explain? Because if you're not in your body, then you may be in your head. If you do feel safety, I've also heard people say you drop down into your body, which that makes sense because you're coming down from your head into your body.

**DPH**

Right. Yeah. So sometimes we can get one form of disconnection is being largely cognitive, which is nothing wrong being cognitive, but that you're actually missing all the information or you're not feeling the signals that come from your physical sense of yourself. That limits our safety, really.

**JJ**

Yeah. Thank you for that. Okay. I want to talk a little bit more about you before we get into what you do, even though we've already started that a little bit. Before you became the teacher, the expert, and the world-renowned leader in attachment and trauma healing, who were you?

**DPH**

Like many people in their 20s, I was trying all sorts of different careers. I was everything from a graphic designer to a corporate training manager of a women's health organization. I was writing training manuals. It was easy for me to generate how do you train people to do their job or train people to how to be with customers or that thing. I was into training. I was very humanistic, but I was in a corporation that was not at all humanistic. They were awful, really. They were based in Philadelphia at the time. They tend to use fear motivation all the time. As a manager, I was always trying to take their fear motivation and convert it into something humanistic and kind and empowering and change the message because I was really into win-win. I'm trying to make this safe and fun place to work instead of everybody being worried about losing their jobs all the time. That was an interesting challenge. I had to be a hidden humanist because unless I talked about anything like why not to fire people all the time, I would have to put it in a frame of like,

well, it's costing the company money to do all this training because they wouldn't respond to the fact that it was just not the right way to treat people.

So that got old pretty fast, even Even though I had a high-level position, it was like, oh, man, I wanted to be in a situation where my values were more reflected. Also, my trauma history came up because I had a head-on collision and it opened up my own trauma history. Then also before I became a therapist, I studied for 11 years to become a spiritual teacher in the Diamond Approach. I have a strong background in that. I'm still doing that work. I started that in 1979, so that's how old I am. Dinosaur. Then I really thought when I was doing the spiritual work, which had a psychological and spiritual integration, and my own trauma history, I got really interested in healing. Then I decided to get the education, become a therapist, get the license and all that good stuff. I have a master's PhD, all that thing. Then I got really interested in how to work with trauma. Then after that, I got really interested in how to work with attachment. There's all of that background of my explorations prior to being a therapist.

**JJ**

What was early life for you? What was your family system like? What was it like growing up? What was school like?

**DPH**

Oh, gosh. Well, I really liked school. I found it a refuge from my family, actually. It was easy. I mean, school just told you what to do, like do this, do that. You did it, and they were like, excited that you did it. That was just super simple for me and clear, which is not like my family. My family was very confusing and just a lot of unsolvable situations that you were thrown as a kid and also probably some mental illness from my family, certain members of my family, that it resulted in acting out violence and a lot of harsh criticism, that thing. School, for me was great. I was like, I'm out of here. I'm just going to go in. Teachers like you if you do what they tell you to do. I mean, it's easy to be liked in school because you just do ABC, whatever it is. I was happy in school, and I also retreated into books a lot. I probably read a book a day. I was crazy. I read almost every book in the junior library in our town because I retreated through books, too. I found another life in all these books, and I always hated it when they ended.

I lived through the books. There were good aspects to my family, too. One of the things I'm grateful to my family for is they had really solid values. Just basic good. People don't talk about that anymore, but I'm so grateful that I grew up with just a really good sense of how to be a contributing, reasonably good human being and what that was about through my church and

through my community and my parents were really good about that. That was something I've always been grateful to them for.

**JJ**

Were there ever any point where maybe you felt unseen and had to feel like you had to work for love or to be seen?

**DPH**

I would say every day. It wasn't the most loving, contactful environment for me. My sister had a nickname for me called the Zombie Kid. That gives you a sense of how much disconnected I was as a kid when I was home because it wasn't just safe. Sometimes it was safe, but largely it wasn't safe. I was just trying not to be a target. I was just got really good at hiding and really good at not saying anything. Not being seen was safer for me. Being seen, I think, happened more at school, which I think is why I excelled at school, because I flourished there, but I never talked about it at home. My mom would go to PTA meetings and find out all this stuff about me and just, Why don't you tell me this? I'm like, Well, whatever. I had a double life in a way when I think about it now when you ask that question. But I managed. I was really lucky that I had, for the most not every teacher, but a lot of really good teachers. I got a lot of kudos for reading so much. My vocabulary was like crazy advanced for a little kid because I was reading constantly.

They didn't believe I could read so much. They'd make me do a book report every day at lunch. But of course, I could do it because I read the book. I mean, it wasn't a big deal. Reading and my dog and my best friend were really great resources for me. The fact that we lived in the mountains, I could get out in nature a a lot. So nature really helped, too. And there were certain things my family did. We lived along a river. We used to do water skiing and lots of picnics and things like that. Being outdoors was really a big resource for me.

**JJ**

How do you think your early life affected your love life once you started dating?

**DPH**

Well, I have a pretty severe trauma history that was even outside my family about being violently attacked as a kid. I actually had a pretty healthy fear of men. I was not comfortable dating in high school. I didn't know why I was so scared because I had dissociated from it. Later on, when I had a head-on collision, it opened up that trauma history, and I understood what my symptoms were about. I was always skittish. I guess I would say I'd have disorganized attachment. It didn't

come from my It came from this other situation. But I think that definitely had a big impact on my ability to date or feel comfortable with all that. I was friendly and everything, but I was like, I don't know. It seemed dangerous to me because it was dangerous early on. I think that was a big impact on me till I finally was able to work through it.

**JJ**

If there was a version of you that you could go back to now before you understood trauma and attachment, who would it be and what would you say to her?

**DPH**

You mean a version of myself?

**JJ**

Okay. A younger version of yourself.

**DPH**

I'm not sure I understand the question. She was pretty confused, so I don't know. I think, well, I was very artistic and creative, so I would just say that's good. Then you had a lot of really great intelligent coping strategies, and I'm really glad you eventually got the help you needed to do the healing.

**JJ**

Thank you for sharing that. I think it's important that we understand how our early life experience can have an effect on who we become and how we act and what things we do. I think that that journey shapes us in a way. I think that probably propelled you into learning about attachment theories. For those who don't know the science behind attachment or even what attachment, attachment or attachment theories are, can you get into that and break it down?

**DPH**

Sure. Attachment theory has been around a long time. John Bowlby made a major... Many people made major contributions, but I like his in particular, along with many others. He really sees attachment as our biological inherent. We just come with the with our bodies. It comes with us as babies, even in utero, that we can recognize. It's like an instinct. You know how to be hungry, right? You know how to be thirsty. You don't question that. It's just part of the package,



part of having a body. He really looked at it, I would say, looked at attachment that way, that it was our instinct to bond to our caregivers because we're dependent as little ones. We don't pop out of the birth canal and are able to run around and make money and have a place for ourselves. We have to have someone that we go to when stressed or scared or for protection, but also for love and nurturing. I think that is really... Attachment theory is really like what happens, what's an ideal scenario for connecting and bonding, what's healthy. But this is the thing I want to underscore, is we know that.

I mean, you know in your body when somebody is kind versus when they're hateful. I mean, you know, right? But as we interact with different caregiving styles. Our parents learn their parenting often from the way they were parented. It's very easy to pass it down in generations. I think most parents do the best they can. They sometimes have unresolved trauma that interferes with their ability to be the ideal parent. But a lot of people are listening to their parents. I just wanted to take that burden off your shoulders. You only know what you know when you know it. You might be learning some things today that you didn't know before, and that's fine. But our whole goal is to move our families ourselves and our relationships forward in a healthy way. I think attachment theory is really helpful to identify what is healthy and where some adaptations away from this inherent health that we have for secure attachment that happened to us, that interfere, got dumped on top of it or whatever. But if we peel it off and we heal the disruptions, we come back to our basic nature, which is love. We come back to our basic capacity for love.

We have that. It's not like something you have to make or create. It's there. It just might be severely disrupted. That's what I've dedicated my work to, is to try to figure out, Okay, it's great to know the theory and all this stuff about it, but what do you do with it? How do you move from insecure attachment to secure attachment? How do you move from the suffering and the woundedness back to wellness? That's what I'm trying to really reinforce for people. It's very, very possible to do that. It's possible to learn or earn secure attachment if you didn't start out with it. A lot of us didn't start out with it. Probably 50% of the population, I don't know. There's always research on that and the statistics change. But it's not a small thing to heal your attachment history, but it can be done. We are able to heal. The reason I'm stressing that is there's books written out there that say if you didn't have good support or nurturing in certain developmental stages as a kid, you will never have it. I disagree with that.

The attachment system can be very forgiving and can heal quite a bit. Maybe not 100%, but it can do a significant shift back to secure attachment from attachment injury.

**JJ**

I'm glad you added that part. Are there different types of attachment styles, and do they show up differently in relationship?

**DPH**

Yeah, they show up quite differently. It's not easy to do this briefly, but I can try to give you an overview, and you're welcome to interject any comments along the way. Secure attachment is what we're trying to get back to. Some people were born in pro-social families where people were really attuned to you and really reflected your emotions accurately and really helped you feel safe and had time to be playful and were trustworthy and reliable and consistent and all of that good stuff, affectionate in an appropriate way, were able to repair when something went off the rails, they could apologize or they could help you find a better way and good at problem solving, good at all those yummy things. That's very, very helpful to start out with that. In fact, if you have started with secure attachment or you've learned it later, it mitigates you. It gives you a shield from getting post-traumatic stress disorder. There's research that shows that it really mitigates any post-traumatic stress related to whatever happens to later in life. It's important to get back there. Whether you do it later or you had it in the beginning, it makes a really big difference.

They have research that soldiers coming back from war, and they've all been exposed to the same horrific circumstances sometimes, that those that have secure backgrounds don't get nearly as symptomatic or they recover very quickly. In contrast to people that had attachment injury, they might go into post-traumatic stress disorder, which is really not a disorder. It's a normal response to overwhelm.

**JJ**

Incredible.

**DPH**

That's secure. Then avoidant attachment. These are not sequential. I have to give them to you in a certain order, but they all happen at the same time in utero and right after birth. Infant is absorbing like a sponge the relationships between themselves and caregivers, and also the relationship even between the caregivers, moms and dads, or moms and moms, or dads and dads, or grandma and mom, or whoever is in that primary attachment role. The way they relate to the child, but even the way they relate to each other, is impacting the relational blueprint the child is developing unconsciously, and really in an embodied way, because they don't even have an ego structure yet to tell a story about mom does this, dad does that. That's not happening

yet. It's even pre-verbal. A lot of what's happening is pre-verbal, so it's often not conscious yet, which is why when we understand better, more compassion, and with curiosity instead of judgment, we don't take things so personally. Or we see our partner later on as an adult like, Oh, okay. We might even be able to identify their attachment style. But we don't use that as a label like, Oh, you're just being so avoiding.

You understand the wound behind it, and then it's not about you, even though you're at the brunt of it because you're in the relationship with that person. It's most likely coming from their attachment history. It takes a lot of that taking it personally out of the reactivity of adult relationship, which is huge. That's a really big shift. I love the fact that it opens the door for compassion and healing and also lessens the tendency to judge or be critical or see people harshly because we don't understand what probably happened to them that put them in a certain attachment, focus or adaptation. With the avoidant style, usually... Now, things can happen beyond parenting. You can have maybe a baby's born and there's a difficult birth, and the mother has to be in the hospital, and the baby has to be separated from the mom for medical reasons, or vice versa. The baby is premature and has to be separated. There's all sorts of different things that can happen medically. You can be born in a warzone, you can be born during a famine, you can be born in a marginalized community where there's all sorts of microaggressions that are happening.

So there's more to it than just moms and dads and dads and dads and moms and moms or however that configuration is. But for the time we have, I'm going to focus mostly on caregiving because a child has to adapt to the capacities, but also the deficiencies of their caregiver to survive. They have to match it. And that's why they will adapt away from secure attachment if the parent is not present secure attachment. The way that happens for the avoidant is the parent is usually... Babies are very active. They're trying to engage with you. They're looking cute, they're looking at you, they're grabbing your hair, they're gurgling or cooing or whatever they're or maybe crying, but they're trying to connect. They're not like they used to say, blank slates. That is not at all what's going on. Children are blank slates. If you're reaching out for connection—which you need to survive, it's not just a luxury item—and your parent is like, nobody's home, nobody's present, nobody's there. That's terrifying to an infant because they need you. They need you to respond. A parent might be dealing with unresolved trauma, and they're dissociated. They can't maybe in help that, but it's going to be a problem for the kid.

The kid will start to feel like they have to do it all themselves, which, of course, as an infant, you can't do. But they'll feel like connecting is not working. Connecting, I'm just going to shut down my attachment system because this isn't happening. It's not nourishing. Or the parent can be actively rejecting. There can be severe neglect or reject. Neglect or reject is what happens

avoidant. It could be that the parent is angry a lot or just looks at the kid with hatred or they have a lot of contempt they're changing the diapers because, I don't know, it smells bad, whatever. But it's too often and it actually becomes a pattern. If it happens once or twice, not a big deal. But if it happens repetitively, that's a problem. The third way avoidant adaptation will set up is if a parent actually shows up, but they're only teaching the child tasks and left brain activities, like how to read, how to write, how to ride a bike, how to talk different languages, whatever that is. But they're not emotionally engaged. They're not right brain to right They're just left brain to left brain. The result of that is that kids that grow up with the superpower they usually have is they're incredibly productive.

They don't get sidetracked by other people's emotions or other people's needs. They're pretty self-sufficient. They get the job done. The culture loves that. But from my perspective, we want them to have that productivity. Yay, great. But also be able to have the capacity for intimate relationships and to be nourished emotionally and be able to show up connected to themselves and connected to others. We're just trying to repair that part. Because very often when there's been a parents that have been disconnected emotionally or really don't honor the child's needs. A child grows up not feeling their needs, not identifying their needs, or just disowning most of their emotions, just shoving that aside. They stop. They literally put the brakes on their natural inherent to bond. They tend to knee-jerk, isolate, and do things alone, and have a better relationship with their computer, their iPhone, than they do with a person, or the better relationship with animals instead of people. That may not mean that they might still have friends and stuff, but it's hard for them to hit a certain level of intimacy. Intimacy can feel really challenging because of the original imprint didn't bode well for that to feel safe.

A lot of times, if an avoidant gets really close, they have a wonderful evening. You have a wonderful evening with them, probably the next thing that's going to happen is ghosting because they'll be like, Oh, that was great. And now like, Oh, my God, that happened. They disappear. But if you understand that, you understand your partner has that issue. You can say, Oh, my gosh, I really enjoyed tonight. I know we both had this really incredible intimacy. I really loved it. I know you might need to take some space now. It's okay. I'm still here. Instead of taking it personally like, This person is rejecting me. How Why did we have this closeness? And now I can't even get them to answer a text. You need to understand the dynamic. To say, That might have been a lot. That might have felt like overload. You know Sheldon on Big Bang Theory. I don't know if anybody watches that show. It's an old show. He is like that. They have this... I think they have intimacy with each other. They've been dating five years only on their birthdays or something. It's a little bit in that territory, although that's a comic, a sitcom.

But he's probably a good, somewhat of a representative of that dynamic. Yeah. So that's what I would say about avoidant. I'll give you a chance to say something before I go on to the two other attachment styles.

**JJ**

I was just thinking that that has got to be difficult, even if you understand, okay, I just had an amazing evening with my partner, if you're dating or what have you, and then they disappear. It's got to be difficult not to take that personally or to feel like I did something wrong, or this person doesn't like me, or that they really have a good time, especially if you come from a secure attachment, which understanding an insecure attachment or an avoidant attachment has got to be like 2 plus 2 equals 94 or something.

**DPH**

Well, another part of that, because it does affect us in our adult relationships, avoidants, because they go so deep into self and they don't really connect to others so much. They're very self because when they try to connect to other, we've got to look at this compassionately, the parent was either rejecting in a really horrible way or they were neglecting them in a really horrible way, or they just weren't present. They have that history. They don't think of relationships as particularly nourishing. Now, you can have a little bit of this or you can have a lot of this. You can have a range. Most of us have a mix of attachment styles anyway. But if you know your partner tends to do a lot deep dive into themselves, like scuba diving into aloneness. If you scuba dive, if you come up too fast, you get the bends. If you understand your partner, if they're avoidant, they really need time to shift from aloneness to connection. And ambivalent, I'm going to talk about next, is really big into connection, but they get really concerned about aloneness. So this is the opposite dynamic.

For instance, if I'm inviting my avoidant partner, I don't know, to an amusement park or something I know they love to do, whatever it is, and I say, Hey, honey, let's go. It's your birthday. I want to take you to the amusement park or the water park or whatever that you love to do, or I want to go hiking, or whatever it is. They're deep in their computer, do video games or research or porn or whatever they're doing on their own. They're going to have a hard time surfacing, and that they will feel interrupted, and it will feel uncomfortable to them. They might give you, and here you are inviting them out for their birthday, they might give you a very abrupt, brusque response. Hey, I'm in the middle of something. Instead of saying, Oh, thanks, honey. I'm in the middle of something. That's going to hurt. That's going to be like, Well, shoot. I was just trying to give you a shift. If you understand, what you would say instead is, Hi, I want to take you to your favorite whatever, and I know you need some time. So how much time do you think

you need to surface before I circle back and we can go? And then they say, I need 20 minutes. Great. Okay. Come back in 20 minutes. It's going to be fine.

You gave them time. If you don't understand they need the time, you're going to be all upset that they act pissy when you interrupt them. That's very common dynamic. Now, here's the thing. If you're walking out the door with that person and the phone rings and you take the call, you're disrupting the connection, and they will probably revert to aloneness. Then you're going to have to do it all over again. Once you're present, you need to stay present with them to keep them connected. If you understand these things and you don't think, Okay, there's something wrong with them, you don't look at it like that, you go, Okay, there's certain things I can do that makes this easier for both of us. Then if they're willing to learn what your things are, You need reassurance. You need them to text you when they're on a business trip and you know they got there safely. You need certain things, and you're willing to accommodate each other related to your attachment wounds. That's helpful. You don't have to accommodate forever. I mean, we do have to stay tethered and each other. But as you accommodate these wounds, they will start to heal, and people will start to move the meter towards secure attachment.

Then there's more confidence, there's more relaxation, there's more comfort with being together and comfort with being alone. All of that starts to sort itself out. Usually, if someone is with themselves, they have learned or earned or started out with secure attachment, if their partner is a bit in the insecure category, the research shows that it takes about a year to two years for them to move to secure. Because if you're secure, they're always getting secure responses, even when they're doing something that comes from attachment injury, and that eventually will impact them in a deep way. It's not your responsibility, though, to be somebody's therapist or to try to heal their wounds. They have to buy in. They have to do some of their own work. You can't do somebody else's homework. You can make it easier for them. But ideally, both partners want to move towards secure attachment, and then a lot can happen. But if one person is just not interested and wants to continue the same behavior that's really painful, that may not be such a great recipe for a good situation.

**JJ**

Your example of scuba diving and coming up too soon, that is so good because it makes it so clear that this person, if they rush up, they're going to get sick. They're going to get the bends.

**DPH**

They're going to get angry, usually irritable.

**JJ**

Yeah. And if you apply that to a person's attachment style or their need to have space or time to process, it would make it so much easier. I mean, it would make it so much more understandable. It may not make it that much easier right away, but once you understand, then the ease may come shortly thereafter.

**DPH**

Exactly. Another example that is avoidance tend to not be so comfortable with emotions because their parents either didn't reflect emotion accurately, like you have a parent that smiles over anger, so it's confusing to the kid because the parents smiling, but you've had people in your life like this, right? They have these very calm voices like this, but you can just feel the rage underneath. You're like, boy, this person's like a volcano waiting to erupt, even though they're sounding really okay, sounding almost hypnotically calm. Not a good thing, right? When kids are exposed to that, which, of course, sometimes they are, that's really confusing emotionally when they're trying to understand emotion. But if a parent reflects emotion accurately, like, Oh, honey, I just heard that your schoolmate call you a terrible name, or I just saw that kid push you over on the playground. I'm so sorry. I can see you're really hurt and you're really sad, and we have to figure out what's going on there and work with it or something. You're empathetic and you're reflecting in an accurate emotional response back to the child, then they feel like, Oh, okay, I can feel this, and I'm seen, and people get it, and I'm understood, and I feel an attunement.

Very different than, Oh, it's no big deal. Just toughen up and hit the kid harder than they hit you or something harsh, that's not going to develop a healthy range of emotional expression. Sometimes it will show up in an adult relationship because avoidants then sometimes just disconnect emotionally. They just don't do it. They're not making a decision not to feel. They just have learned to shut it down so they don't have access to their emotional range. We're trying to bring that back on board. But what it might look like in a relationship is, let's say, I don't know, your dog just passed away. I hate to say that, but something hard happened and you're crying and your avoidant partner is just looking at you, and they're like, I don't know why you're so emotional. We can get another dog. Something like that is not going to feel good. Or you see that your emotion, you're having your normal emotional response to that is overwhelming your partner because they don't like to do that. If you have the presence of mind to say, you could say, Honey, I really need your support here. I need you to hold me.

I need you to console me, but I can see you're overloaded. Why don't you take a break, walk, just go outside and be in nature for whatever time you need, and then come back, and then I really need you to show up me emotionally. If you honor the fact that they might need a break

because emotion is really hard for them, they will probably come back and be able to be a lot more supportive because they feel understood and attuned to. You're not going to know to do that if you don't understand the attachment style. You're going to feel like, I can't believe this person's being so cold and I'm dealing with this grief and they're just not even there. You're going to have a strong reaction to that, understandably. Also, if the avoidant understands you, they're going to say, I can see this is really emotionally devastating, and I'm really sorry that happened. You know what? I want to be there for you. I just feel like I need a 10-minute break. I haven't had lunch yet, and I can tell I'm thinking more about food. I'm not there with you. I'll be back and I'll be there.

I'll do what I can to be there. There's ways you can talk to each other that understand your different situations compassion and kindly that really make a relationship much safer for both people.

**JJ**

It's funny. As you were talking, I was thinking about the different love languages, but this could also be connection languages or attachment languages.

**DPH**

Right. Learning to speak all different of the four attachment languages is really important. It can help a lot if you understand. Also, you don't take people's behavior so personally. If I know somebody needs time to surface and I forget to give them the time and they get abrupt with me, I can go, You know what? I didn't give You need some time. So just tell me when's a good time for me to circle back. You don't have to go like, Oh, my God, the person's a jerk. They're being really creepy. You don't have to go through all that. You can eliminate a lot of suffering.

**JJ**

We can co-author a book, The Attachment Languages.

**DPH**

Yeah. I know. I teach a whole class on that. I've got a lot of material on that, actually. It would be a good book to have more explicit. That's true.

**JJ**

Okay, what was the next one?



**DPH**

The ambivalent attachment is a different scenario. The avoiding attachment shuts their attachment system down. These are all happening for survival reasons, not because a person is making a decision to do that. It's unconscious.

**JJ**

Can you say that again? It's unconscious.

**DPH**

It's not somebody making a cognitive decision. Okay, I'm not going to cue for attachment. I'm not going to reach out. It's in your body the way you You try to survive your early circumstances. You have these projections. We all do this. Every human does this. We project our past onto our present and onto our future. We think we're going to see more of the same. I mean, you just basically feel like you're going to wake up in the living room of mom and Dad, whatever those dynamics were. With Ambivalent, they actually had really good parenting experiences. They actually know what healthy attachment feels like, but their parents were really inconsistent. So it was on again, off again. They'd feel like, Oh, I can relax into this yummy relational field. And then boom, I feel dropped emotionally, or dropped physically, or dropped spiritually. Just this something happens in the parent that They can't stabilize. They can't consistently keep that going. Because inside, they're getting triggered into their own attachment injuries, is probably what's happening. So there's this on again, off again. What happens over time, when that's repeated over and over and over again, Then a child is going, I don't know.

I mean, they're loving now, but what else is going to happen in 10 minutes? Or when is the shoe going to drop? Or when am I going to get abandoned? They get really focused on the abandonment that's coming. They can't even really enjoy the yummy stuff that's there because they're just waiting for the bad things. Because they are sure, over time, this has been a pattern, if you have a little of this, you expect disappointment. If you have a lot of this dynamic in your history, you'll tend to get angry. You'll pick fights with the person because you're so sure your adult partner is going to ditch you somehow. They're going to leave you somehow. You're mad at them before they even do anything. They may have any intention of leaving you at all, but you already decided they're going to do it, so you're just angry to begin with. What we have to do in healing that is understand that we can have and take in caring behaviors, and it doesn't automatically follow that something bad happens today, now in our relationships. That's hard for people that have ambivalent because they tend to feel like they don't have an issue.

It's their partner that's doing everything wrong that's causing them distress. That's how they internalize it because they're very other-focused. The avoidant is very self-focused and not other-focused, and the ambivalent is very other-focused and not self-focused. So part of what they need to learn is how to be authentically self-focused.

I had a woman in Germany that I worked with a long time ago, but it was such a great example. She came in, she goes, Oh, my boyfriend, he's never available. I keep picking the wrong men. They're always unavailable. I'm usually with them for two years, and then I break up, and I'm ready to break up with this guy because he travels for work. He's never around, and I'm like, Oh, my gosh. Then I interview her a little bit about her history, and it's glaringly ambivalent attachment history. I say to her, Well, you've been with this guy for two years. Isn't there anything There has to be something he's done that's been kind or helpful or supportive. She's like, No, he's out of town. He's never here. I said, No, come on. Really? There has to be something because they tend to dismiss caring behaviors. They don't see them. I'm just holding her foot to the fire. She's getting a little irritated at me, actually annoyed. I said, Come on, there must be something that he did. She goes, Well, he calls me every night when he's on the road and sees how my day went, and he checks in with me. I go, That's nice. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I said, Well, was there anything else? And she goes, Well, he travels a lot. So when he is in town, he usually takes me away for a really cool weekend for three or four days to someplace special because he's gone so much. And I'm like, Well, that's nice. And she goes, Yeah. She's surprising herself because she hasn't given any thought to this. She's dismissed at all. And she goes, Yeah, that is nice. The other thing he does when he's traveling, he buys me these special gifts, and they're usually stuff I really like, so he must pay attention to what I like. He must know me, what I like, because he gives me things that I really, really cherish. I'm like, Well, yeah, that's pretty nice.

We go on and on. She's shocking herself. She's like, I didn't realize he was doing all that. I'm like, Yeah, that's interesting, isn't it? I said, Well, let's try something else. I want you to imagine there's a table full of all the things you want in your relationship, affirming words, like the love languages, the frame of words, acts of service, safe touch. I mean, anything you would want in your relationship, just pile it up in front of you on this imaginary table. She goes, Okay. I said, So now I want you to take it in. She tries to take it. She goes, Oh, my God, my whole body contracted. I go, Yeah, isn't that interesting? She goes, I can't take it in. Because see, a person needs to understand they have a trouble receiving, not that the other person is doing everything wrong. I mean, they might be making some mistakes as a Nobody's perfect, but that's a dynamic. I said, Well, let's see what happens if you just take in 1% or 1 atom or 1 quark or

something. She goes, Oh, I can do that. My stomach relaxes. I said, And nothing bad is happening because I'm trying to separate that good things happen and then bad things happen.

And nothing bad is happening right now. She goes, Yeah, that's true. She goes, I can take in, Oh, I feel fulfilled. Oh, my stomach, I feel really... Oh, it feels really good. She goes, I want more. I'm like, Great. How much do you want? She goes, 4%. I go, Let's go to 4%. She keeps upping it, 10, 20, 30. I think by the end of the session, we could maybe get to 40% or something. She's able to stay in the fulfillment and satisfaction is really the antidote for the ambivalently attached because they never get the fulfillment, which is why they keep pressuring their partner, and they keep making demands, and they sometimes a lot of complaints, because they don't realize that no matter what their partner does, they don't receive. They can't take it in. If you take it in, no matter how much people do right, it's not going to feel good. He realizes she's got to practice receiving. When we go back to all the things he was doing, like calling her at night, the special trips, the really relevant gifts, she could take it in and start to actually feel and appreciate him and appreciate the love she actually had in her life.

At the end of the session, she goes, Oh, my God, my boyfriend's going to be so glad I did this session with you. I'm like, I can't imagine you're ready to break up with him at the beginning of the session. To go home and love on him a lot. She goes, Yeah, I've got to keep him. I'm like, I think you do, too. That's why you're understanding your attachment system, compassion and with kindness and self-care, that you can let go of some of your self-sabotaging things, like not seeing caring behaviors and not being able to receive, but then blaming the other person as they didn't do it right, and that's why you can't receive. It's really probably because the way your attachment system is set up for survival reasons blocked your receiving or made it really difficult. I mean, I had this happen in my own life.

When I was married, my husband would say to me, he goes, I love you so much. When I say that or when I do something affectionate or I do something like make dinner, it runs off you like water off a roof or something or water through a sieve. I was like, at first, I got really angry. I tell the story a lot because it's so relevant. I was like, I do. That's a terrible thing to say. I do not hear it. It really hurts me that you can't receive my I love. I was like, I love it. The middle of the night, I woke up and I'm like, Oh, my goodness, I do do that. I do. Then I realized how much I was hurting him by not taking his love in. I realized I didn't come from a very loving environment, so I didn't know what to do with it. It made me uncomfortable. I didn't know how to receive. I made a practice for myself that I would show up and stay present whenever anybody, and especially my partner, would do something kind or loving. That was very hard in the beginning. That sounds crazy. Why would it be hard to receive love? Well, it can be very hard. Now it's easy, but I probably had to really focus on that for six months to a year to not deflect. I could feel the

impulse to deflect because it made me uncomfortable. Then I go, Okay, be uncomfortable, but then you get to be loved.

This is a good trade-off. When I explain this stuff, it's not like rocket science. You get it. People get it. They immediately go, Oh, yeah, I can. Okay, that's hard, but I can do that. An avoidant can practice approach. They hate approach because they're very uncomfortable with connection sometimes. So you can say, Okay, just see what happens if you go up to one of your friends at work and you ask them for their, I don't know, just ask them to lunch, just something that's manageable for you, but you initiate connection. And that's going to be very uncomfortable in the beginning. I had a friend I met at an art studio, an art fair thing, and she's a very talented artist, and I'm an artist, too. I love that. I do a lot of art. I invited her to come over for brunch. Then the next year, she said to me, You don't know how hard that was for me to do. I was so uncomfortable going to your place. I really enjoyed myself, but it was so hard for me to show up. Now, I understand that. I get it. I totally get it.

She goes, But you know what? I've worked through that, and now I really want to be with people, and I want to do things. So let's go to the movies together. I'm like, She invited me to the movies after she had been so devastated that I invited her to brunch. It can change. That's the thing. We can heal, but we have to be willing to go through some of the discomfort of the transformational process. But the benefits of moving more towards secure are huge. It's a gift that keeps on giving the rest of your life. It's worth it, in my opinion.

**JJ**

I mean, just the example you gave about the client that you're working with, she had all these things she was getting. Once she put them on the table, she was able to realize, Man, I do have a lot. He has a lot to offer, but it was just she wasn't able to receive it. Then hearing you make the suggestion about asking one of your coworkers after lunch, I got uncomfortable just thinking about it.

**DPH**

Yeah. It does require, unfortunately, to get a little bit out of your comfort zone. But just like my friend, Joni, some big thing happened because she was uncomfortable at the brunch, but then she was inviting me to the movies, went to the movies, we had a great time, went to lunch after that, too. The payoff is so big, but it is true. Getting out of your comfort zone seems to be part of the requirement.

**JJ**

Yeah. But getting out of there is where the magic happens. It's for sure worth it.

## **DPH**

Right. Then just to briefly, disorganized attachment is the most complicated because it has trauma mixed in with the attachment system. The attachment system is trying to connect, and the trauma is perceiving everything as dangerous, so it allow the connection. You have to separate, just like with the ambivalent, you separate yummy connection, and then it's going to be dropped energetically somehow. In disorganized attachment, there was so much fear or chaos or growing up with addiction or a lot of anger or a lot of violence or whatever, or abuse in the worst case scenarios, that you hit a certain level of intimacy and all the red flags go up. Like, danger, danger, danger, Will Robertson. It's like, don't go. Even though you cognitively know your partner is a safe person, everything in you is telling you that the relationship is dangerous, and that's confusing to the partner and confusing to you. If you understand that you have some unresolved trauma to untangle from the attachment system to work with the trauma separately and then give the attachment system a safe place to land, there's all sorts of interventions we do for that, then you can feel safer in a relational context.

But there can be a lot of dysregulation with disorganized attachment because of the unresolved threat. And so learning to co-regulate with your partner or with other friends and learn how to self-regulate really helps you build relational resiliency.

## **JJ**

Thank you so much for sharing, especially the way... I mean, It sounds like we're talking about a ball game or something. You're explaining these complex things, the nervous system and the brain and attachment. So I'm grateful to have you, and I'm grateful for the work that you've done. Let's say somebody is listening and they go, Man, I have attachment issues, and they want to figure out what to do next. What is the first step for someone who is new to all this, but recognizing that it is something that they struggle with?

## **DPH**

Well, fortunately, back when I started doing all of this, gosh, it must have been early '90s or mid '90s, there was hardly anything written about practicalities, like what you can actually functionally practice or what to and that thing. My book, Power of Attachment, is a good resource. I have lots of experiential exercises, not to promote my own book. There's also a book called Attached by Amir Lavine that has a lot of ways to recognize different patterns and what happens in dating and what happens in different combinations if you have an ambivalent person

with an avoidant person. I also have that a little bit in my writing, too. If somebody's really interested, we have all sorts of courses for the public. The Intro to Attachment styles is on our website, Trauma Solutions. We have a whole for the public thing on shame because shame is really debilitating and infiltrates into our relationships a lot in not a good way. We're just putting more and more things together for the public on that. Then for professionals, people from the public can take these courses, too. But we have ones that are oriented to therapists, Attachment Mastery Program, the Dynamic Attachment Repatterning Experience.

We have a lot of programming for professionals. My commitment is to shine light on anybody that's doing great work and doing wonderful healing work. I collaborate with many other people in the field, and I produce their courses, or I co-teach with them, or I do the Oprah roll where I'm amplifying what I think their gems, their gems are in their approach. There's a lot of really good information out there. And fortunately, trauma and attachment has become much more accessible with courses and people talking about it. Back when I started, there was this idea that the body and the mind were completely separate. And if you said that there was a body-mind integration, they thought you were crazy. We've come a long way, and there's a lot more resources.

We have the free attachment quiz. If you want to get a little more sense of what's going on with your attachment history, it's free. It's on [traumasolutions.com](http://traumasolutions.com) or my name, [diannepooleheller.com](http://diannepooleheller.com). It goes the same place. You can take that as much as you want. I just recommend that you take it focused on one relationship at time, like your mother, your father, your partner, your kid, your coworker, your friend. Take it just thinking about one person because you start thinking about the dynamics in too many different relationships, it just won't be very accurate. Also, if you take it thinking about yourself, not on your best day, like when you're tired or maybe a little sick, it'll give you a better reading on what your default attachment system might be. Very often, you get a pie chart. It's a mix of attachment styles. It's based on your answers, so it'll give you some feedback.

Plus, then we give you some little ebooks and things based on the different attachment styles. So we try to give you a lot of... We're trying to get the information out there so people can have more compassionate and easier ways to connect with each other. Those are resources. If that's helpful, you're welcome to partake of them.

**JJ**

Very helpful. All right, so let's say if you could sit down with someone who is terrified of love, someone who's been hurt and doesn't believe real connection is possible. They come to you and they just lay it all out on the line. What do you say to them?

## DPH

First, I would give them big kudos for showing up in my Zoom or my office because they're reaching out. And so some part of them wants to understand and open up. And I would acknowledge how difficult that can be, especially if you came from circumstances that were really challenging and difficult. And I might interview them with whatever they were willing to tell me about what happened early on. Basically, as a human, I'm trying, and this is true for all my relationships, but especially when I'm doing something like therapy or trying to interact with someone that's wounded, I'm trying to presence secure attachment the best I can do that as a person and create a safe relational field, just for them to experience that somebody can have empathy, somebody can be attuned, somebody can understand. As they're describing their history, because I know the language is involved for attachment styles. I can say, Well, it just sounds like, wow, there just wasn't safety in this situation, or there just was nobody that listened to you. You didn't have access to anybody who really felt that you felt like you could lean into or feel supported by.

Then I might do some things like, how is it to feel that here? Or if you were to design your own ideal mothering presence in a purse, what qualities would that person have? Or have you ever seen anybody in a movie or read about somebody in a book that you felt they understood or they were an antidote or they represented something that was much more nourishing than what you actually grew up with. I would start to poke around to see if we could access some resources that they can relate to personally Or maybe they just love being in nature and maybe they hug trees. I'll start there. Or they have a really strong relationship with their animals. I go, Yeah. It's wonderful. You have this really great relationship with your dog, your cat, your llama, your horse, whatever it is. Maybe at some point, it'll be okay to open to a human. Let's just consider that possibility. I go, Oh, no, that's too much. I'm like, Okay, so there was something that made it seem really dangerous. Relationships are really dangerous. Taking curiosity and caring and understanding and trying to resonate with what the person's circumstances are can be really, really helpful.

Then I might interview, a little bit like what you did today. When you were emotionally hurt or physically wounded as a child, who did you run to and what did they do? How did they respond? Or when you had something to celebrate, who did you tell? You can start to see where there might be some pockets of positivity and there might be at least more awareness of where the wounds are. To reflect that and say that, I mean, in an ideal world, your parent would have responded like this, and then you say what that would be and say, These are my words. Maybe you have words that you like better that your parent would say. Tell me what that would be. You start to explore secure attachment. There's something new that I'm doing a lot of these days is

It's intergenerational trauma. It's probably my next book. It's going up a generation and saying, You know your mother or your father really well. I can't do this with everybody. This is not an exercise for everyone because you have to be in a certain stage to be able to do this. But I'll usually work with their attachment injury, and then I'll say, I just wonder what you think for your parent to be that cruel or that consistently mean and demeaning, something must have gone terribly wrong upline.

I just wonder if you focus in on your, let's say, I don't know, dad, it doesn't matter, mom, dad, whoever it is. What do you think happened? Just looking at them as a human, what do you think wasn't there for them? Or what do you think? I mean, maybe they grew up during World War II, or they never came out of a war situation and got any support to transition from being a soldier that had to be in all these difficult circumstances to, Well, how do I be a good dad and how do I be a good husband? I look for where that disruption is. Then if they can identify it for the parent, then I do a whole working on, Well, let's see what your parent needed and let's see what happens in you as you experience possibly your parent having their needs met. That's surprisingly productive in mitigating some of the wounding that came down from a parent because people make a really big shift in a relatively short period of time. That's another whole topic, but it's another way to help healing happen, even generationally.

**JJ**

Yeah. I mean, because you would immediately allow for grace for your parent. I think that separates who they are from what they did.

**DPH**

Exactly. It opens up... I had one guy that said to me, I have been working on this for 30 years, and he was in my class, so he knew my context. I was teaching in a emotional trauma. But he said, I've been working on this, and my father was so cruel. I felt like it was a life and death experience every time I went home. I didn't know if I was going to survive being home. So pretty brutal, right? Detroit and the whole... He just this really brutal upbringing. And he goes, And my dad's dying now, and I don't want anything to do with him. I'm not going to talk. I don't care. I just... Whatever. It doesn't matter to me. And I'm like, Well, okay. Because he was asking the question, Can you work on this intergenerational stuff if the parents still alive? I said, Well, of course you can. I said, If you want, I can do a mini working with you and we'll just see where it goes. I have no idea where it's going to go. I said, Same thing. What do you think happened to your dad that he was so incredibly cruel?



He said, Well, he just never had anybody that was there for him. He had a really violent father, and he never had anybody that cared about him or understood him. I said, Well, if we just focus on your dad for a minute, do you know of anybody in his life that he could hear that they could be there for him or that he could take it in or he could even consider that somebody was there for him and understood him a little bit? He goes, Well, yeah, there was this guy that was older than him that he really looked up to. He was in our family so much. We called him uncle, but he was a friend of my dad. So I go, okay. I said, Okay, so I'm going to call him uncle friend. If you bring uncle friend into the picture for your father, we're focusing on your father now, and he goes, Oh, yeah, but my dad's going like this. My dad wants to write him up. I'm like, Well, okay, your dad's understandably, he doesn't know what to do with it. It's In your mind, just let them hang out. Like, your uncle friend is maybe not saying anything.

Maybe he's saying one or two words. Maybe he's touching your dad's forearm. Maybe he's just present, saying, I'm here, but not even doing anything. So we hang out for a few minutes, and he goes, Oh, it's really weird. I see my dad soften. And I'm like, Oh, interesting. And he goes, And he's smiling. I think I saw my dad smile twice in my entire life. This is really weird. I don't know this person. I said, Well, you don't know your dad with support. You know your dad without support. So this is your dad with support. He goes, Yeah, he's smiling and he's taking in this support. He goes, But what's really weird is my grandmother, my father's mother, showed up. I go, Okay. She was born in a war zone, and she wasn't nurturing at all, but she's wanting to mother him. She's already dead. She's wanting to mother him. I'm like, Well, that's cool. How is it for your father to receive mothering, which he didn't have when he was little? He goes, Well, that's not even the focus right now. It's my grandmother's healing because she really to be nurturing and to be a good mom, but she never did it in real life.

He's healing her. Her own mothering nature is healing. I'm like, Well, that's really amazing. He goes, Yeah, because I can really see her. She's just transforming into this nurturing mom. Then later on, Well, how's your dad receiving that? He said, I've always resented these people that talk about having healthy families. I always resented them because I thought, I have no idea what that is. He said, But now I'm starting to I have a healthy family. I'm like, Whoa. Or at least I know what it is. I can feel it. I can feel my grandmother being nurturing, my father taking it in, my father being kinder, not kind, but kinder. He makes points out. I'm starting to feel like, wow, I have a dad who's more accessible. He said, But I still don't know if I want to talk to him, even though he's dying. I'm like, Well, whatever you do, it's up to you. Whatever you do is fine. I said, But I think you and he are going to have an easier time with his passing from the work you just did. Well, he was in a class with me, so I got to talk to him a week later.

He said, Well, it was my sister's birthday who's been estranged from me for six months, two years. She never picks up my calls. She just cut me off because that's what we do in our family. I called her on her birthday. We did the session on Thursday. I called her on Sunday. She answered the phone. I'm like, Whoa. He said, Yeah. We talked for two hours about my dad, about our relationship. We had this connection. It was like, unbelievable. I said, Well, how's that impacting you? He goes, It's like otherworldly. I can't even explain how different this is. It's like it goes all directions when you heal generationally. He said, I'm not promising anything. He's very clear to be stern. I said, Okay. He said, But I'm feeling like I might want to reach out to my dad. I said, Cool. I said, Yeah, whatever you do is fine. But you see, that was 20 minutes. The impact that had, and I didn't even say anything about his grandmother. I mean, it just starts opening doors that you can't even... I'm just trying to ask intelligent questions. All of this is happening in the client.

The client is generating all of this. I'm just asking a few prompt questions. I'm not directing anything. I'm not suggesting anything. I'm not saying this is good, this is bad. I'm just being there and inviting some curiosity to their dynamics. I countless examples of how people move sometimes from hate to love or sexual abuse to love in a relatively short period of time. I'm excited about this way of working also. This is off what we were talking about, but it's something that I've been doing lately. It's new.

**JJ**

You should be excited. I mean, that is huge. 20 minutes and all of that happened. And you see that over and over and over?

**DPH**

To be fair, he was in a class with me, so he knew what I was talking about. I don't have to go into all the explaining. But still, he wasn't expecting it.

**JJ**

Yeah, still.

**DPH**

Hwe goes, I've been working on this for 30 years, nothing's going to change. I'm like, Okay, that's fine. Well, let's just play. Let's see what happens. But a lot can happen in a short period of time. I'm not trying to emphasize the shortness. I'm trying to emphasize that we have this inherent capacity to heal in all of us. All human beings have it. If we're willing to be a little

vulnerable and maybe a little uncomfortable, but a little bit curious and allow some of that healing to come through, very powerful things can happen. We don't have to stay in suffering. I mean, suffering is a natural part of the human journey, but we can reduce unnecessary suffering by repeating patterns or just continuing to be at the effect of our history in a major way. With the right support, I think we really do need good... In my world, it would be attachment and trauma-informed support can be really, really powerful.

But we can do this with our friends. I mean, We can do it as a human being in the world. We can present secure attachment even when people are behaving poorly. That's one of my personal challenges is that I believe in reconciliation so much as even when people are hateful towards me, I don't go there. I mean, I just go, Okay, let's see. Then maybe time has to pass, but I will try to move. I mean, I always do it perfectly. I mean, I screw up all the time, too. But I will try to look for opportunities. I did that with my mother. That's one of the greatest accomplishments of my life because my mother was really, really difficult. I mean, wow. We need to go into all that. She was also a pretty cool person, but she was really, really difficult. I felt like we ended in a very loving relationship by the time she passed. It's a major life accomplishment for me that I refuse to just become embittered and all that, which is easy to do when somebody's being that mean. But it's like, I'm trying to see how powerful reconciliation is.

I just think it's important. If you have to be up for doing it, it's not always the easiest thing to do.

**JJ**

Yeah, indeed. Thank you so much for sharing that. It's got to be so fulfilling to help people get to security. I think for 30 plus years that you've been doing it, you've had to have some really, really great moments. Let me ask you this, with all the work you're doing to help others, what is it that you want people to know most?

**DPH**

I want people to know that healing is possible and that our basic nature is love, and that when we heal a disruption, we come back to this basic nature. Our loving nature is our nature. A lot of things can interrupt that. A lot of things can wound that. A lot of things can fracture that. We can disconnect from that. But when we do, that healing possible and that we can find our true nature, that it is there waiting for us if it's not obvious already. When I do sessions with people, they might start pretty contracted and maybe pretty uncomfortable about something. But by the end of the session, they're emanating light. There's light in their eyes. There's light coming. I know that they're moving. It's a green light. They're moving in a direction that they're finding themselves. You are worth finding. You're valuable. You are incredibly precious and have so

many capacity and so much creativity and so much love to share. I just feel like, I guess, the most important thing for me, for me personally, is to learn about love, emanate love, be able to receive love, which was very challenging for me in the beginning, not just in a relational context, but just in how I see the world, even when things look pretty difficult, which is not hard to find.

I'm trying to orient in a certain way as much as I can. I see the power of that, not just about me, but just in the world when we can find that inner sanctuary, but also presence, something that opens up possibilities and tries to invite other people's true nature out, to make space and be receptive and also support that essential self to take the front seat instead of our ego defensive self, but we naturally have as humans.

**JJ**

Thank you so much for sharing it. That was so beautiful. Thank you so much for this. I so enjoyed this conversation, listening to you, hearing your story, your journey, your message, what you offer. It's just incredible, and I'm just so grateful.

**DPH**

Oh, thank you. It's been a real privilege to be here, and it's a privilege to be on anybody's human journey with them. So I've the luxury of doing that with many people. I thank my clients, and thank my mentors, and my teachers, and thank you for inviting me. This has been really a delight.