

# Ep #12 There Are Certain People You Can Heal With. Sometimes Your Spouse Isn't One of Them



## Full Episode Transcript

We're back this week and today we're going to be talking about how there are certain people that you can heal with and sometimes your spouse isn't one of them.

I want to caveat this episode by saying, this is something that I have learned for myself very very deeply from my own personal journey. My previous marriage, the work I've done post that in healing from my childhood trauma and seeing how important it is for me to have a secure environment either in myself or with a partner to be able to do that work so, just know for some of you, because I was thinking before I started this, I was like, if I was listening to this episode back when I was still married, this would not be what I wanted to hear. Some part of me would have really felt like well shit, like no, no I don't want to hear that, you know, I can heal

with anybody and everybody and although you are this incredibly amazing and infinite being, I do, in my own journey from acknowledging really what, you know, the cards I was dealt to start with in this whole life that I'm living, I have found even though I could survive in really, really difficult situations, I now have a different standard for my life, which is only being in relationships that are truly supportive and loving and the ways that I need them to be going forward. So, I say that to all of you that may feel a little bit triggered or there might definitely be emotion coming up for you as you listen to this episode. Just to remind you that I see you and it's okay to know these things and to also give yourself the grace as you go through your own journey with considering divorce around figuring out what that's gonna look like for you and deciding for yourself, how much processing and healing from your own childhood trauma and being able to do that with a partner matters to you. Everybody gets to make that decision for themselves. For me, it is everything. It's one of the most important pieces of my life theme, my life journey, whatever it is I choose here to learn is prioritizing being able to heal in really, really supportive environments.

So, with that little caveat, last week I talked with you guys about attachment theory. And this episode, we're really just going to dive into kind of where I left y'all right. I was like, okay, so, you know, now we know attachment theory is so important and we know the power of, as I said in that last episode, that you can heal your attachment style with healthy relationships later on in life. Before we jump into that, I want to talk with you about trauma bonding. That's just kind of the name I'm going to put to overarch this idea that I have seen for sure in my own relationships definitely in my marriage. And then in clients as well.

I'm going to read to you something. So, I'm going to attach in the show notes, a couple of articles that I found that specifically talk about this idea, which is, why do we end up marrying partners that can feel very much like our parents? Do we actually end up picking romantic partners that in some subconscious way are re-traumatizing us? And the same way that our parents did. So, I want to read this piece. It says, "according to psychologist and researcher, John Gottman, Mate attraction and selection, maybe either hormonal or the potential result of a phenomenon known as imprinting. This theory suggests that we can become psychologically conditioned to being attracted to a distinct parental personality type with the accompanying need for love by the time we're 18 months old." 18 months old y'all. "This imprinting is the result of a combination of factors, including perhaps most importantly, how we received or were deprived of love, intimacy and security from our parents or primary garden."

So, at 18 months old, we have the potential to already be imprinted with this. I like to think of it as a blueprint in our mind of what it is to receive or be deprived of love. And if you've done any research around this, especially in like the attachment book it'll talk about this too, but this idea of why we pick the mates that we do, this will come up. These ideas of like we're trying to close the loop around what happened to us in childhood. And that can often mean we're seeking something from our partner that subconscious part of our brain knows they cannot give us and yet we compulsively want it from them, just like we wanted it from our parents.

As human beings we are drawn on an unconscious level towards the familiar. This is why, you know, when we talk about, getting into a healthy, like once you start dating, sometimes you'll find when you get into a relationship that feels more secure, that feels healthy, you can end up self-sabotaging and I'm going to talk about this later in the episode. Oh, I've seen this coming up for me recently a little bit. Why, why is that happening? Because the brain, at such a young age, 18 months, imprints this idea of what love is and it would rather feel comfortable. It would rather feel like it's in the known of okay, I know what this conditional love feels like then risk going out into the unknown of creating and experiencing something different. As a coach, this is what I am working with the most in my clients, is this propensity for the brain to prefer known even if it's toxic, even if it's unhealthy, it's known and the known feels comfortable. Helping our brains go wait a second, yes, it's known yes, it's comfortable but if it's toxic and unhealthy, I can use my prefrontal to decide I want something different through the tools that we learn in coaching be able to support and be there for our nervous systems, enough to make the big leaps and the big changes and to step out into the unknown, to change those generational patterns of trauma that for maybe our parents or our grandparents, them not having those tools leaves them stuck in these patterns of just staying in the comfortable, staying in the known.

I think so much of my own mom in this instance. Knowing what I believe that she knew about my abuse and still decided to stay in that relationship with my dad, I do have a lot of compassion for her because she was not a college graduate. She was young when she got married. She already had, I believe at that point, probably three children. My brother right after me has down syndrome. So, talk about intense, absolute fear to strike out on her own at that moment. Right? Without those tools, she did what most humans do, which is, I'm just going to stay in the known. I'm not going to get divorced. I'm not going to leave this person, even though I know what has happened. Even though I know the abuse that's happened with him and our child. I'm too afraid and then the brain just creates incredible structures and stories to allow you to perpetuate that as you go through your life.

So, it may not be healthy staying, but it feels familiar to our brain. That's why it wants to stay. In the show notes, like I said, I'm going to link to these articles and if you're interested in this, I highly recommend reading it. This is just a pattern that I see over and over with my clients of subconsciously choosing a particular type of partner and not even realizing how much that person is very similar to your parents. I mean, I did the same thing. I remember getting married to my ex-husband and we both agreed, we didn't want to have the marriages that our parents had and yet by the end of it, it was very clear that we had so many of those same elements just right there as well in our marriage.

Thinking back, I remember having two clients in that I was coaching her actually in second marriages. When we first started in the three-month coaching, they hadn't fully realized, it wasn't until we were about halfway through, that all of a sudden it like dawned and they were like, "oh my gosh, I have actually chosen in my second marriage a husband that has the same underlying patterns as my first marriage. It's just in a different package. And I remember being like, wow and then being completely shocked to realize here, you know, I got out of my first

marriage thought I was going to do something different in the second marriage, I thought I had. And ultimately, it's still the same patterns. It's just with a different flavor of person, but still the underlying pieces.”

So, why is this even a problem? Like why does it matter? Being married to someone who tends to treat you in the same way as your parents of origin did. Why does this matter? I want to read the section for you all from Pete Walkers, complex PTSD from surviving to thriving, cause I think this is really gonna hopefully shed some light on why, why I'm emphasizing this to ya'll right now.

He says, and if you have the book it's on page 55, highly recommend, as I've said before, getting this book, it's huge. He says, “I've worked with many clients who began therapy with me while they were still over controlled by their traumatizing parents, both externally, as well as internally. Sometimes the control was enforced by as little as one phone call a week.”

Which side note y'all this was so me when I was married, I definitely had external and internal control happening with my mother that I had no idea was going on. It wasn't until I started therapy in 2017, 2018, that my therapist was able to start teaching me about narcissistic personality disorder, and I began to see the level of abuse happening in that relationship.

So, he says, “not infrequently these clients were also being overpowered and or abandoned in relationships as abusive and neglectful as the ones they had with their parents.” Okay so he's saying he has clients who, while they're experiencing this from their parents, they are also experiencing the same level of abuse or abandonment in their current relationships, marriages, partnerships. This is repetition compulsion. At its most destructive and it strands survivors in experiencing the worst of both worlds.

Then he goes on to say, “through in-depth exploration of their childhood trauma, many of my still trapped clients achieved psychological freedom from their parents for the first time in their lives. Once again, this was a freedom that they had not actually achieved, even though they had been living on their own for decades.”

I so relate to this. I might even have to do an episode on this in the future. Diving into this exact thing, but staying focused, he says, “these clients gradually learn to live more successfully on their own without their parents over controlling, spoiling influence. Their ability to build self-nurturing relationships with themselves almost always correlated with a major reduction or complete severing of their relationship with their parents.”

Whoa. I remember reading this for the first time in this book. And just feeling so validated because I remember when I was going through coach training, you know, as you learn the power of the brain and your ability to manage your thoughts and your feelings and change your results there was kind of this idea that cutting people out of your life, wasn't necessary and the ability to coach yourself around them and I just found that was not working for me. It did not feel good to keep this person in my life. And actually, I, I did just like he said, I found the best

results I got were when I ultimately drastically reduced my amount of contact with my mother. I was able to heal a lot from that but, you know, in my marriage, I didn't know at the time, but I was experiencing the same things because my brain had gone and picked someone with very similar traits and ways of interacting that were just like my mom. And it got to a point in my marriage where the constant re-triggering and just the merry-go-round of activating each other over and over was psychologically damaging me. I knew towards the end, like if I don't figure this piece out, if I don't leave, just a deep part of me knew I'm not going to ever get my head above water. I'm not going to be able to heal in the ways that I need most.

I was just at that time. I was completely being consumed by deep despair. And abject fear that things would never change. And they weren't, it was, it was too much for my nervous system being in that marriage and being constantly re-triggered. It really was like I was drowning and I just couldn't get my head above the water enough to stay grounded to stay stabilized in myself, even with, you know, granted by the time I filed for divorce, that was 2019, I'd already been doing therapy for two and a half years. And yes, she had taught me a lot of amazing things that had grounded me in myself, but any re-triggering in the relationship. You know, and spiraling back into those emotional flashbacks and having that be a regular foundational piece of our marriage. Just made progress so slow.

It's like one step forward, three fucking steps back. And I mean, looking back, I can see that. An instance with my ex-husband, he is still in just like baseline a good human. And I know that is, I'm going to be real with y'all. I know that is not the case for some of you, some of you have partners. That are just. Really kind of, you know, in my head, I'm like shitty people. But I say that with the understanding that shitty people are often people who have severe trauma in their past. So, it's this compassionate kind of balanced understanding of like, yeah, sometimes there are people who just baseline level cannot show up with compassion or empathy for others. In my case. That is not my ex-husband. He is, you know, in general, a good, kind, wonderful Dad and person. But looking back, I can see that it was really, it was neither of our faults, the way that the marriage was going, the way that the re-triggering was going. But rather a result of not being a good match for healing. And I want to give you guys an analogy to kind of help you think about it.

I was researching, I don't even know where I'd heard about this, but hydrogen peroxide and vinegar are like if you're like me, I've become more, conscious of the chemicals in my environment, trying to clean up my body more and so I don't use, I try to stay away from chemical cleaners.

So, hydrogen peroxide and vinegar are like go tos that I use a lot in my house. And they're very environmentally friendly on their own. But wildly enough, you know, you'd think, oh, two good things. Let's put them together, they're going to be great. If you put them together, they create something called peracetic acid. Which is actually really, really toxic and they don't recommend it. I have an article that I'm linking in the show notes that talks just about it.

So interesting right, on their own great, together toxic. Let that sink in. I love this analogy because I think it is a more neutral way for you to wrap your brain around this idea. That there are just people out there that you are not going to be a match with. That you are not going to experience healing with or moving towards the goals and the things you want most with. Not because either of you are bad, not because something went horribly wrong but just because sometimes, we're not a match. And I love thinking about it this way, because so often when we're in the thick of the marriage and we've been working so hard to try and make it work at all, letting ourselves acknowledge, hey, this might not be a match can sometimes just relieve that pressure that it needs to mean you did something wrong or you were bad.

In my instance, I know a hundred percent for myself. In my marriage, I did nothing wrong. That was just the way those cards were going to get played with the tools that me and my ex-husband had. We did the best that we could with what it was and I feel immense gratitude that I eventually realized, this is not enough for me and I need something else to heal in the ways I most want in this life.

Now, coming back, I want to caveat this by saying that is nothing to say of partners who are actually more toxic on their own. Like I was saying earlier And I want to add into that analogy. Like if you look up bleach, and when it combines with, you'll see a lot of things that should never be mixed with it. And I would offer this as individuals who are on the narcissistic personality disorder spectrum are much further on the spectrum, then my ex-husband was. So you know, in the instance of my mom, definitely much, much further on the spectrum of MPD disorder and the best move for me without a doubt was to not have her in my life very much. And that's what he says right, In that CPTSD book in that instance. Your ability to build that self-nurturing relationship with you almost always is related to that reduction in that relationship with that parent. And that's another piece to the puzzle that I really want to give to you in this episode in realizing, okay. So often dynamics in your marriage that are toxic and unhealthy came from the relationship you had in your relationship with your parents as a child.

I'm thinking specifically of one of my clients who, while we were coaching, she's realizing all this stuff in her marriage, that's not healthy. And she's starting to see how, oh my God, it's in the relationship with my mom as well. And as we coached together and she ultimately ended up deciding to get divorced, what she found to be the most supportive was also reducing the amount of having her mother in her life as well. Yeah, she's really beautifully healing at this point and thriving. It's been really neat to talk with her post coaching together for those three months and hear how things are going. So, just know it's like an onion. There's lots of layers here. When you start seeing the patterns of childhood and how they show up in adulthood, they don't just magically go away.

So, at the beginning, you know, I was talking about how I do believe you can survive just about anywhere. I mean, human beings are incredibly resilient. I love owning myself and, you know, I know that if this is the case for me, it's the case for you too, that you are in incredible, like incomprehensible being with seriously untapped power which I won't go into right now. But just



because you can do something, doesn't mean you should. So let that like, hear that again. Just because you can do it does not mean you should.

And I'm thinking specifically of one of my clients who definitely has this pattern as we've been coaching of thinking that the goal is to be able to stay in that marriage and thrive in that marriage even with very apparently all of the cards stacked against her. And the cards being stacked is yeah, you guys having similar trauma patterns from your childhood and a partner who's maybe not aware of those or willing to work on those.

It really all comes down when you're thinking about whether this person is somebody I can heal with whether this is the journey I want to go on. It all comes down to you knowing. What you want most in your life and how much of your resources, your time, like you want it to take to experience those things.

I'm going to use an analogy to illustrate this. And I love this. I'm going to just dive in. In the world that there are people who want to climb Mount Everest. I don't understand them. But I totally am like you do you, boo. You know, it interests them, it calls to them, they fill it in their bones that they're meant to make that climb. And for me, that is just not my thing. I love watching documentaries on people like this but I have no desire to climb Mount Everest. And even after watching all these documentaries, I'm still not drawn to it.

Now stay with me, because of the way my ex-husband and I were raised with my undiagnosed CPTSD, my childhood abuse with my father, the narcissistic personality disorders that are in both of mine and my ex-husband's families. Childhood trauma for both of us that was not dealt with at the time that we were married. So, imagine all of those dynamics, all of those interacting in that marriage, felt like climbing Mount Everest to me and not in a good way. Y'all in like a super overwhelmed, I want to die, I'm so miserably unhappy right now way, a like holy shit this is not what I signed up for.

Imagine you have to climb Mount Everest, but like nobody informed you of what it was going to be like. You're getting dragged up the mountain, you are not prepared, you did not have the oxygen tanks the things that you need, and you are just getting beat. I mean, this is where that deep, deep, dark depression that I had in my marriage was coming from was psychologically me being like, oh my fuck this is, oh way too much. And not only that, the biggest piece is knowing like this isn't a journey I signed up for. I had no idea this is what that was going to be like. Nobody in my family was being honest about what it actually takes in a marriage and I get it because I don't think they were actually being honest with themselves either about what they were experiencing.

So, not what I thought marriage was going to be like and ultimately deep down, not what I wanted most because what I want most in a marriage is mutuality. Like we are equals in this. We are both here for each other. I got your back. You got mine. We're both dealing with our own shit. We have deep levels of connection and safety. I feel safer with you than I felt with anybody else. You are the safest place in my life, and I can share my deepest, darkest parts of

myself with you. And through that process, experience, healing and connection, and, you know, the piece that I've always wanted. Right? The feeling of safety and love that I was missing in my childhood. So, obviously I'm in this marriage, that is not what is happening. In fact, it's getting worse and worse and worse. I'm noticing my mental health decreasing, I'm noticing, you know, physical symptoms happening, physical illnesses.

So, for me, and this won't be the answer for everybody, right? This is why this episode is about considering divorce, but for me, the answer was to stop trying to climb the mountain where I was dying and take a different path. And that different path for me has been, you know, over the last four years, I've really realized how important having alone time and space with only supportive, loving friends in my life around me. How crucial that is. I have made an intentional choice to not have individuals who are overwhelmingly triggering for me in my life at this point. And I don't think I ever will to be honest. Now that I know I've CPTSD I'm like, no, if you fucking trigger me all the time, it's just not, it's not a thing for me. I'm good. I already have lived like that. My whole childhood looked like that in my marriage. And through taking that space, right, in getting divorced, I had a lot of time where I could heal on my own.

That journey has been more like going hiking in the mountains rather than climbing Everest. I can breathe here. I can stop and take in the views. I'm not worried all the time about avalanches or do I have enough oxygen in my tank or are we going to fall off this cliff.

And I just think that analogy helps visually for you to understand. Putting yourself in an environment that is conducive to your healing. For me, that meant getting divorced. That meant having, I remember within the first year of my marriage, just the gratitude, I felt in moments where I was in my home, all alone by myself. And you guys have to realize, like I'd never experienced that. I had lived in a family with seven younger siblings, my whole life with my mother, super involved in my life. Then I went to college. So, it was with roommates and then I got married right after that. And so basically it was transferred from my mother to my husband. And that pressure just compounded with each child that I had in my marriage, because then it's like, yeah, I really am like never alone. And guys my nervous system needs silence. It needs space. And now having that balance in my life where, you know, half the time I am alone, because my kids are with their dad half the time. Has been super healing for me to just have silence, to just have peace, to just have a space that is mine and mine alone, with Jackie, of course.

So now, with the healing that I've done on my own, right. So we're thinking of like, I'm still, I'm still hiking, I'm still up in the mountains exploring, I'm still living my life. It doesn't mean it's all easy peasy. I'm still hiking, but it's not the same level of just like, we're getting fucking rucked on Everest right now. Now with the healing of done my own, with supportive friends, coaches, therapists and various partners I've been able to choose the other mountains that I want to climb. And I think of like in each relationship that I've chosen, it doesn't mean it's been easy. It's still been hard, right? Because in a lot of those relationships, I was still dating people who were either anxious or avoidantly attached. But I was still able to get growth and have it not even be close to like the level of Everest climbing that I was doing in my marriage. Because one, I'm



getting to choose it consciously. Two, I'm doing it with partners that were more aligned naturally with me. And it was more easy to be with them and have them support me in the ways that feel best. And three, I had the freedom. I always knew I could leave at any point, because now I'm in a space where I'm not married. I'm dating, so I have the opportunity to go into that space, go on that journey with that person while without the fear and all of the pressure that I had in marriage, like this has to work because we're married. And I could, you know, if at any point, I felt like the light or the growth went out of that relationship, I had the right to step back to release that, to release it with love. To let it be complete and to come back to my own personal journey, which for me is the most important piece. I need a foundation of deep connection and secure attachment with myself to be able to thrive in relationship.

In describing all of that, I want to come back to this key thought that I had while writing this episode, which is like, okay, so how, if we know how important it is to have a partner who can be securely attached with you so that healing can happen and you're not just stuck in this pattern of re-triggering. How do you know if your partner is someone that you can heal with? The key to a possible future or you get to grow and heal together, I believe is if your partner can one acknowledge their dysfunctional patterns as well. And to actually want to change them.

So, when clients want to know if I think their partner can change, because I will have clients ask me, like, do you, do you think he's, do you think he's going to be able to change? I always ask them these two questions. The first one is, can he, or she admit that they have their own problems and childhood trauma? And two, is he or she actively getting help to heal on their own?

Let's break both of those down. So, the first one, can he, or she admit that they have their own problems and childhood trauma? Y'all, if your partner cannot admit their trauma, or even acknowledge that it's there, we're not even at the first part of the journey. Which is awareness. And this is so common. I'm just having flashbacks of so many clients that I've talked to, who will tell me things like, I talked to someone yesterday who said her husband had said something like, yeah, I'm going to therapy, but it's not for me it's so that I can understand you. I remember in my own marriage going to therapy, begging my ex-husband to go and the sentiment was like, I'm good. You've got problems, so I fully support you going, but like I'm good. So, if your partner cannot acknowledge this like the adage is true that you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make them drink. And trauma awareness and change is seriously one of the most [personal choices out there. Like I get it. I so get it because I remember feeling the same way. Like this would help things so much. He's got things that he could work on. I get it that you think it would help things. I get it that he would be better for it. But the reality is you cannot, for someone to look at their own pain and you cannot force them to go do that deep work that's going to actually make the changes, not just the surface level. I'm showing up to some meeting checking the boxes. Trauma work is like deep intimate, getting to know yourself and I will say it is not for the faint of heart. So, I get why they don't want to do it and I don't judge anybody who doesn't want to, but where we're running into a huge problem is when you, as their partner are doing your own deep work and you are paired with someone who is not interested in doing that on their side. And the reality is it is not something you can force someone else to do.

So, a big piece is processing if that is the case for you, if it's like, I have been doing the work. I want more. I know what I want. I know I want these deep levels of intimacy and connection and feeling fully seen and known by my partner. Someone can only fully see and know you as much as they see and know themselves. And if the reality is you've got a partner, who's like, I'm good. I don't need to go see or know any of that because I don't have any problems. The next step is grieving. It's feeling the sadness of this person isn't going to go there with you. At least not right now. And for me, I realized, even though my partner, my ex husband, kind of towards the end, started doing that work, I had reached a point where I was not willing anymore to wait. To spend the next, you know, 3, 5, 10 years with him doing that journey and that journey without the guarantee that he's actually going to figure it out, that he's actually even, you know, That's investing massive years of my life joping that somebody will reach this level, that they may not even be capable of reaching.

Do you see it? Y'all. It gets really murky really fast when you're staying, just because you want, cause you're hoping somebody will change. I've found with my clients, a huge piece of that is acknowledging the sadness when you finally realize, okay, this person is not interested, at least right now at this point in their life in doing that work and I can't change them.

The other aspect of this whole, you know, figuring out if your partner is someone you can heal with or not. Is he actively getting help to heal on his own? So, not only does he need to be able to acknowledge, I have issues or I have trauma. It's not enough to just do that though. He then needs to actively be getting help to heal on his own. Personally, I do not count marriage therapy in this, and that is just from personal experience from watching my clients. I mean, I have a client right now, who's been in marriage therapy for over a year and a half. And in many ways, still unaddressed the deepest core issue in their marriage, because guess what it is, it's emotional intimacy, empathy and vulnerability. And him not doing his own work has prevented that. So, no matter how many times they go into marriage therapy, and they talk in circles around the elephant in the room. So, I don't count marriage therapy in this, in my opinion.

And what I've seen is that marriage therapy is typically a shit show. Because it's a shit show when you have an individual who's not aware of their own trauma and who doesn't have their own tools. Because typically there is just so much projection, not to mention, you know, they're getting off on being able to rely on you facilitating the going. What I see, is it just long-term it just doesn't seem to work. And what's needed most is your partner going and doing his own deep work. Now, if you've got two people who are investing in their own deep work and then using marriage therapy to facilitate, that could be a game changer. I haven't seen it yet, but I'm open, I'm open to that kind of a scenario. In fact that was, you know, before I became a considering divorce coach. That was what I wanted to be.

I actually built a coaching program where I took five couples through testing out this idea that I had, that if I could be coaching each of them individually, teaching them the tools individually ahead of time and then, you know, bringing them back together that we could make real progress.

And you know what I found? I found the men were not interested in doing the personal work and dragging them into this container where they had to do their own work. I made so little progress with a lot of those men because they weren't committed to the work and the women that I had in that group were just all in desperate to learn the tools. And that's why I became a considering divorce coach for women because I was like, I hate working with people who don't want to do the work who are just being dragged into that space because their partner's unhappy. And they're like, okay, well, I got to do something.

So, Not doing the deeper work is the very thing that blocks your partner for being able to have truly vulnerable and empathic, honest conversations. And if they're not doing that, then you're showing up to marriage therapy and you're just talking in circles and actually what happened to me. And I have seen this happen in, in my client who's been going to marriage therapy for about a year and a half is it can really actually like be detrimental to your own growth because, like I remember. We went to one. Maybe two marriage therapy sessions before we got divorced and I'd been doing therapy for a while before then and watching that therapist validate and kind of push back on what I had questioned my feelings was so destabilizing for me at the time, because I had done so much work with my personal therapist to trust my reality to trust my version of events to not ,which is very difficult when you're in a co-dependent narcissistic relationship, which is what I was in. That going back into that space and having her, because narcissists can be very tricky in therapy. They look so good and they say all the right things. And you can end up feeling really crazy as the codependent in the room, trying to say it feels this way though, yes, they're saying these things, and it looks really pretty on the surface, but underneath. It feels really, really fucking shitty.

Thank God, like after that first one or two sessions, I was like, no, I'm done. I'm not doing this. I have worked too hard for too long. You know, two and a half years of my own personal therapy to go risk losing it in marriage therapy. Not going to happen. So, your own personal work is hard enough that you do not need the added weight of trying to facilitate and drag someone else into doing their own work. It's exhausting and it's just, it's not possible. I've seen it like until someone's ready to make that change, they're not going to make that change.

Okay, with all of that said maybe take a deep breath, because I know for some of you hearing those two questions and maybe being honest with yourself about where your partners at that may feel really, oh God, I'm like, I'm kind of getting emotional. That may feel really heavy right now. I want you to know that if that's the case for you, I see you and I love you.

And definitely if we've grown up with anxious attachment and codependency in our childhood, and always hoping that that person will eventually show up for us and love us in the ways we need, it can be really difficult to see honestly, maybe admit to ourselves for the first time that that is not going to be the case.

So, I want to share with you all, because this I think one of the things that's been the most important for me in taking this journey for myself. And trusting that what I want matters and

that it's possible. Is through that journey, being able to share the things that I've learned and provide hope. You know, now, granted it's never been a guarantee. I mean, I definitely have had plenty of moments with my clients where they're like, so is what you want. Are you getting it Britta? Is it possible? And I've been honest about like, no, I haven't found a partner yet. That's you know, securely attached enough to experience the levels I want to experience, but I am growing with each partner, they're more secure than the last, I'm more secure. It's getting better.

Until now. Which you know, is this next section I want to talk about, which is the current partner that I'm dating. So, you know, all of this journey has led me to my current partner, and I want to take some time to share with you all. What is happening for me at this moment in my journey, because it has always been a dream of mine to get to date a partner that I really feel is more secure in their attachment style than me. And I can honestly say that is not been the case every partner I've dated over the last four plus years. I have been the most securely attached going into the relationship regardless of how we come out. Because I've told you I tend to slide into other attachment styles once I'm in the relationship. Starting out, I have always been the most secure. So, it's always been a dream to see what kind of healing could be possible for me in a scenario where I'm dating someone who's more securely attached and I want to share this with you all because I want to provide, I think back to when I was married and considering divorce, what it would have meant to me, to have heard from someone who was on the other side and was like, hey, this is what's possible because at the time, I did not have that in Mormonism. You know, all the women who got divorced, I don't even know what happened to them. They just disappeared. So no idea of like how it could be, what could be possible after divorce and that's where I want to take you guys.

We're going to shift gears a little bit. So, this partner that I've been dating, been dating him for about three months now. And ya'll, he just came out of the blue for me. At the time, I really wasn't looking. And this is typically how partners show up in my life at this point. Although in the beginning, I did use like a lot of dating apps and I was much more like out there trying to facilitate meeting people, I'm now at a point in my journey where I've really just turned that over to the universe.

I remember probably about a year, a year and a half ago being like, universe I think you know better than me, what I might be looking for in a partner and who that person might be. So, I'm just going to trust that, like you'll send those people into my life. And instead of, you know, spending my energy looking, I'm going to spend my energy really just loving my life and leaning into it.

So, he showed up out of the blue he's unlike anyone I've ever dated before. At the time we met, I wasn't looking. I was just very, you know, present in the moment enjoying life. And neither was he, he had definitely also surrendered deeply to where his life is at the moment. He's much older than me and I'm realizing for me personally how supportive this is. Previously I've dated, partners that are usually within like five to seven years older than me, or even partners that are younger than me. But because he's so much older than me, he's been through a shit ton of life

and because of the work he's done in the past decade of his growth. He is more grounded in himself and very securely attached.

So, yay. First person I'm dating that's more securely attached in himself, in his life than I am in mine. And one of the key foundational parts of our relationship is kind of from the beginning, I remember like the first coffee date we went on, we both were very open about our own traumas, and I had right around that time realized I had CPTSD. So, he was the first partner that I've openly from the get-go said like I have complex post-traumatic stress disorder. And explained what emotional flashbacks were and actually on one of like, I think it was like maybe our third date, maybe our fourth, ended up going into a flashback and like communicating it with him. Like, hey, this is what's happening. I can't remember, I might've talked about that in a previous episode.

That foundation straight out the gate of, I have CPTSD, it's very likely that he absolutely does as well. We have this shared language of knowing what emotional flashbacks are, what regressions are and how to go through them with each other.

So, I want to give you guys an example because this was just, oh my God y'all this was so beautiful. Couple of weekends ago, we were at Home Depot. I have a light switch in my house that was not working correctly and he's like, I can fix that. Let's, let's go to Home Depot and we'll get a switch together. Something so small, okay. Just, we're gonna go get a light switch together and I mean, this is just what CPT SD is. Like, you often don't even realize like how triggering something's going to be, but we went, and I had probably three to four different triggers happen while we were shopping. So, like there were at one point like four of the people in the aisle with us, and I didn't consciously realize it at the time, but I was feeling really like, kind of overwhelmed. And then I, you know, he's asking me these questions and we're trying to make this decision and I'm feeling overwhelmed by like the pressure of having an answer and I don't have an answer and I ended up like knocking something over in the aisle at one point while these other people are in the aisle and that childhood feeling of like embarrassment and awkwardness. And then on top of that, like home projects were a big source of conflict in my marriage previously.

So, the whole, even just the whole idea of like, we're going to a home project store together to get something was triggering. As we're leaving and we're headed to a grocery store afterwards, I start to be able to like decompress it with him in the car and just talking out loud and I'm starting to like, acknowledge like, oh my God, actually, this was really activating for me and this was really triggering and we get to the grocery store and we literally just sat in the car for like 15 to 20 minutes while je just you know, he listened to the whole drive there. And then he just sat. And at one point I just cried. I just needed to cry out all of the overwhelm and it's a complicated feeling, emotional flashbacks, because you go from being this like confident, adult to boom within like a moment feeling like a child again, and that's so disorienting. And I have a lot of shame around it and a lot of feeling frustrated at times that this is my reality. And he just sat there, like physically comforting me, helping my body downregulate, you know, here we hadn't even had breakfast. Like this man is probably definitely hungry. He is taking the time to just slow

down with me and not push me to go do anything until I'm back in my body and I'm back feeling safe again. And it was so healing coming from a childhood where that was never the case where it was always like, suck it up, move on. If I wasn't having an emotional response that matched my mothers, I was always the one that needed to change that response.

So, if she was sad and I was feeling happy, I needed to get sad real quick and vice versa. If she was happy and I was sad, I need to buck up and be happy. Cause she did not, she was not able to hold space for any other emotions than what she was experiencing. So, Incredible moment of just feeling so safe with that person being very vulnerably seen, it is so vulnerable to feel and process those childhood emotions, to be honest about like, I just kind of lost a lot of my shit in that Home Depot internally. I may be looking like I'm keeping it together externally, but inside I am losing it right now. And to not be judged or shamed and to just have that person see me. It was amazing.

Fast forward, we just went to Lowe's this last week to get, he's doing all these home projects. It's the best, we're replacing my sink faucet in my kitchen, and this round, you know? Okay so same scenario, right? A week ago, we went into Home Depot, but now a week later, we're doing it in Lowe's and I cannot even tell you guys how different that experience was. I like started crying at one point in the Lowes, like looking at him, just crying with joy, 'cause I was like, oh, my God here we are in the same thing, but because a week ago, when the triggers came up, they were allowed to be processed, I was allowed to talk through it. Now we're in Lowe's and I am just having a blast, like feeling so much love for him having fun looking at, instead of feeling overwhelmed by the faucets, having fun, looking at all of them. Eventually deciding on something. It was just an incredible, like perfect example to me of what happens when we have partners that we can heal with that neural pathway gets changed. It got triggered at Home Depot, we took the time to process it, to heal. To feel safety in that partnership instead of, and that's the neural pathway healing, right of like it is safe to be seen. It is safe to cry, it is safe to slow down and be real. I'm not going to be punished, I'm not going to be attacked. And then next, next time we go do it again my body's like, oh yeah, this is safe. It's okay. We're with our partner that gets us.

I also want to talk about this, like on the vice versa. So, I'm also able to do the same thing for him. Probably about a month, maybe a month and a half after we'd started dating. We had an event down in Dallas and he was coming from work and he called me and when he called me, I could tell he was activated over the phone and I was in this just like beautifully ground. I was just at the hotel chillin, like grounded space. And I just reassured him, like we have all the time in the world, there's no rush. And when he got to the hotel, I just like held him on the bed. For once again, like 15 to 20 minutes. To just decompress. I told him we could be late and we were totally late to that event like probably like 30 minutes to an hour. And I didn't fucking care because what matters is my partner. And what matters is both of us getting to heal through the relationship. It's not about what we go do it's about what we're feeling as we do those things. And I have examples over and over where we end up doing this for each other, where we are able to just slow the fuck down. To support each other when one of us has an over-activated nervous system. And that is like I said before, it's so healing because neither of us received that



in childhood. Another thing that I noticed the other day, there was really you know that once again shows me how securely attached he is. We were at an event and I wanted to go dance with a friend of ours, a male friend of ours and in the past, this has caused conflict with other partners I have dated. I have like a specific example in one of my relationships where me dancing with somebody else, like caused a huge fight. And I didn't even, with my current partner, I feel super safe about being able to do what I want when I want. So, I danced with this other partner. It's not like I even communicated it with him and he was totally unfazed. So I asked him afterwards, like, hey, was that at all triggering for you? Or, cause you know, I've had that experience with past partners and then trying to control me and shame me and, you know, want me to get small so that they don't have to feel insecure. And he was like, look, if that came up, you know, and it genuinely seems like you wanted to be with someone else, he's like, I wouldn't control you. I would just understand that we're not a match. And, you know, we could go our separate ways. And it just blew my mind. I was like, wow. This is a partner who is genuinely like, I want what's best for you. And I want what's best for me. And if that's not a match, that's okay. But I'm not going to try to change you to make myself feel better. And it goes back to like, when I met him, he was already, we're in this ecstatic dance community here in Dallas, you know, he was already a part of it. I just barely found the community on new years of this year which was such an incredible gift. I can't tell you guys how much it means to have community after coming back from burning man, I had finally realized how much that matters to me.

And so, finding this community has been huge. And then getting to date him, getting to have this partnership within that community has just been, oh, my God amazing, yeah, like a big piece for both of us. You know, he'd been in this community before me. He definitely had people interested in him that he could have dated but he didn't want to, because he just reached this point ;ike I have and realizing that I have CPTSD. Where we're both no longer willing to just date anyone who's interested in us. Like we know our trauma and we want to date people that are the most supportive for that healing, Right. We only want to date partners who are secure so that we can heal together because we've had plenty of relationships in the past. Where long term the dynamic is not, you know, healing. It can become more traumatizing. And I will say, you know, this is not, it's not over yet. And I mean, it's, you know, life is never over till it's over, but, um, we've only been dating for three months now, so it's still early in our relationship. And it's a constant exploration. It's a constant exploration of myself and him and, and of just unfolding and building.

So even as I was writing this episode and this, I do want to share this because this was just so fascinating and the last one, I gained some new awareness, that there is some kind of like avoidant attachment. Shouldn't there be more fireworks and roller coaster highs happening for me, that seems to be surfacing. And I wanted to read it to you cause while I was researching for the attachment episode, I found it in the book, they actually talk exactly about this thing. And I was like, oh my God, this is me. And I think it's important to see this because for those of you, you know, cause I know I do have people listening to the podcast who are in that space of like, I know I have past clients who've already gotten divorced who are in this journey, post-divorce.

So, I want to share this piece with y'all. In the attached book on page 96, if you have it, they are talking about what happens when you as an anxious attachment, actually meet and start dating someone who's secure. So, it says, "if you're anxious, the reverse of what happens when you meet someone avoidant happens when you meet someone secure."

So, when you meet someone avoidant real quick, backtrack, As an anxious, if you meet someone who's avoidant, right? All of your protesting behaviors get activated and you kind of like lean in and want to chase. And that for me, it's that childhood relationship with my mother, right. I need to earn this person's love. They're pulling away from me, I want to do whatever it takes to get them. Now, what can happen sometimes if you meet someone secure, is the messages that come across from someone secure are very honest, straightforward, and consistent. Secures are not afraid of intimacy and they know they are worthy of love. They don't have to beat around the bush or play hard to get ambiguous messages or out of the mix as our attention and suspense. As a result, your attachment system remains relatively calm. Because you are used to equating an activated attachment system with love, you conclude that this can't be the one because no bells are going off. You associate a calm attachment system with boredom and indifference and because of this fallacy, you might let the perfect secure partner pass you by.

Mind blown. In fact, me and my best friend Quinn, she's also dating a partner who is probably at this point, the most secure partner she's dated. And we'd both been talking recently about like, okay at times I'm like, why is there not more, you know, I don't even know how to describe it. More intensity, more like feeling you can sometimes feel alive through the intensity of the trauma bonding that's experienced that's happening in your relationship. And both of us just kind of sitting back and being like, let's just let it be good. It's really good.

And what if it can just be good? And then, you know, I found the section in the book and I was like, oh my God, this is a hundred percent what's happening. My brain is like, where's the trauma because love equals trauma. And in dating a secure partner, I am rewiring those pathways to go. No, no, no, no, love does not mean trauma. Love means no games, safety, consistency, all those things that I just listed. So, you know, my brain was right, moving into kind of an avoidance space when I was noticing it like, okay, it's, starting to go a little bit more avoidant. We'd have these like great evenings together and then I'd noticed the next day, my brain kind of being like, okay, well maybe I'll see him again, maybe I won't, I don't know.

What's beautiful about that is, so I'm realizing this about myself. I'm seeing it in myself. What did I do? I went and talked with him about it. I went and said, what do you know about attachment theory? Here's what I'm learning. Here's this, you know, podcast episode I'm doing. And I discussed my desire for both of us to be aware of any shifts in our attachment styles as we continue dating, because we've both come into this very secure. But as I mentioned before, relationships can kind of destabilize my attachment. And to just be really open and honest with each other as we go through this.

So, y'all like this, what I'm doing in this relationship, this is the mountain that I want to climb. This is the mountain of healing my childhood triggers with a kind and compassionate witness and secure partner. And I can't even tell you how different it is for me. Oh, and how good it feels to be with someone who like, it doesn't matter what we're doing we feel safe doing it together. And it doesn't mean it's not still hard. I'm still triggered, I'm still me, I still have CPTSD. But it is so much just more healing to do it this way. To be in a partnership where yes, the triggers happen, but I have a partner who understands that and can be there for me and I can be there for him. So yeah, I'll keep you guys, you know, I may share updates in the future, but for right now, I just wanted to drop in and provide that perspective because it's new for me to finally have. A partner who's more secure. And to be able to talk about that and share insights into what that actually feels like. And I think that's important, especially for those of you considering divorce, to know that that's possible.

So, in closing out this episode, I just want to do a little recap. At the beginning we talked about how, you know, the patterns of behavior you developed in childhood that you used to try and get what you needed if we in adulthood end up being married with someone that has that like similar dynamic it can trigger us. And all those anxious or avoidant behaviors can come up and if neither of you is secure enough, you can end up in this never ending cycle of triggering each other, just over and over and over again and never healing. I look at my parents' marriage and I'm like, yeah, that's definitely what happened there. They were stuck in a pattern of just the co-dependent narcissistic dynamic, the anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, just interplaying their whole lives without like true depth of healing that I want.

I'm not going to say you can't get healing there, but I want really, really, really, really deep healing. In my romantic relationship. So, the difference is that with someone who's secure, they can spot those behaviors coming up and start soothing and managing them with you. This is my partner sitting in the parking lot with me and just helping me manage through that. And the journey I've been on the last four years of dating has been massively about creating a secure attachment for myself first. That's been the work of having alone time. Silence space to myself. Facilitating work through coaches and therapists without having partnership in my life at that moment that's re-triggering me. And then from that more healed, securely attached place in myself, intentionally dating other partners and experiencing that growth and with each partner learning more and more and more about myself until ultimately getting to this point where I'm getting to date someone who is a securely attached partner. And y'all, it's a game changer. It's a game changer for healing.

So, with that said, it's been amazing spending this episode with y'all. I hope you gleaned some different ideas. Got to think through your own relationship and I will see you next episode. Till then.