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Featured Relationships ToolsPage 2Featured Relationships ToolsPage 3Featured Relationships ToolsPage 4Featured Relationships Tools Tracing Your Anxious Attachment Pattern Let's turn now to an exercise that will help you understand what your anxious attachment behavior is really about. You'll dig deep into an uncomfortable experience, but the goal is to help you understand how this attachment style works in your relationships. 1. Think of something that happened in a relationship that made you feel bad or uncomfortable. What happened to trigger this feeling? The incident that triggered my bad or uncomfortable feeling: 2. Incidents hurt people for reasons that are personal to each individual. If we zoom in on your experience of the event you just noted, what was the worst part about it to you? The worst part about the incident for me: ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Nice job for allowing yourself to be curious about your own feelings and experiences, and why they affect you uniquely! This understanding is an important part of being able to manage your feelings. Here's a bonus exercise: while it's optional, it can be extremely helpful in understanding the pattern of this feeling across your life. Below is a timeline from birth to 20 years of age. The first couple of decades of our experiences can be very formative. If we didn't have help managing the difficult things we thought and felt during this time, they can affect how we view others and ourselves later in life. Consider your first two decades of life. When was the first time you recall having the feeling or experience, or one similar to it? Put an X on that part of the timeline. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 Age Most incidents that evoke big feelings do so because those feelings have their origin in early life. Did you put an X somewhere on this timeline? If so, this is very normal. Now go forward on the timeline and put an X on the different ages when you remember having this same feeling. Try to put at least three X marks on the timeline and as many as you would like. Consider experiences you've had with people at home, school, work, church, and so on. ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Put down your pen or pencil and take a deep breath. You are now viewing the legacy of this feeling or experience in your life. Take a look at the timeline and consider the following questions: 1. How does it look overall? Are there more X marks concentrated in one area, or are they spread out? 2. Did anything surprise you? 3. Are there certain kinds of relationships where you tend to experience this feeling more? 4. Has anyone or anything ever helped you go through this feeling with more ease? ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Soothing Anxious Attachment This exercise will help you identify your own way of approaching conflict with someone in your life who is anxiously attached. Think of someone in your life who can be rather abrasive and express their needs in a critical or pessimistic way. What is your natural response when they behave this way? How do they usually respond in return? With that pattern identified, think about what behaviors might be more helpful for you when responding to anxious attachment. Here are some suggestions to help your loved one in a moment of panic and anxiety. Put a check next to the ones that you already do or have tried. Reassurance. "I'm here." "I'm not going anywhere." Proximity and contact in a way that is appropriate for the relationship. If the person is your romantic partner, use loving touch and embrace. If not, step forward, make kind eye contact and smile, or if appropriate, hold their hand. Take the lead. Help manage the person's anxiety with clear and simple directives. People in a state of panic are more primed for understanding short phrases. "Stop." "Slow down." "Tell me something nice." "Give me a moment to think." ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Pace their expectations and anticipation. "Let's talk about that in a few minutes, when we're calm." "We'll talk about that after we finish this." Ask for specific feedback. "How did the way we talked work for you this time?" Which of these would you like to try the next time you encounter anxious behavior? Write them below, making them specific to your relationship with the anxious individual: ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Map Your Emotions Emotions have both a mental and a physical component, and we can feel resistant to one or the other or both. Directing our attention to the specific bodily experiences that are connected to an emotion can help facilitate greater acceptance of that emotion. Since anger is such a powerful emotion, try this next exercise to see how it works for you. Recall the last time you were angry with someone close to you. Can you feel just a little of what it was like? Where do you feel it in your body? Imagine what size/shape/temperature/color/quality the feeling has. When did it appear? ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Using a pen or pencil, colored, if you wish, make a sketch of what you feel on the part of the body where you feel it. Now, take a deep breath. Even imagining anger can bring the feeling into your body! Acknowledge that sometimes this feeling is in your body and sometimes it is not. Practice telling yourself that there's no need to fight it. When the feeling is there, try to accept its physical presence, and keep an open and even curious mind about what it is there for. Learning how to manage strong emotions in this way can be helpful when you are triggered. ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Safety and Security Needs Consent is only the first step. When it comes to attachment, there are two needs: safety and security. Safety is about relief from an experience of threat in the body. Security is about reassurance that connection and resources are and will remain available. When you feel secure with someone, it feels as if that person is there for you and will continue to be there for you and that they see you in a warm, compassionate way. Feeling emotionally safe and secure with someone is the foundation of trust in a relationship. Until safety and security are adequately present, relationship collaboration (e.g., joint decisions, projects) won't work as well, and healthy communication will be difficult to manage. This exercise will help you explore and identify what it takes for you to feel safe and secure in the midst of a stressful interaction. You might begin by thinking of a specific interaction you had with a relationship partner when your anxious feelings made communication difficult or unproductive. What can you do to soothe your feelings of threat when communication becomes difficult? (Think mainly of things that help your body calm down when it is in a state of distress.) 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ What kinds of things can your partner do to help you soothe feelings of threat? (Again, focus on your body.) 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Because difficult communication can activate feelings of insecurity, what can you do to soothe your feelings of insecurity and reassure yourself of the relationship connection? 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ Now, find time to sit down with your partner or loved one, share what you've learned about safety and security, and explore the lists you came up with. The following prompts may guide you through a useful discussion. • From what you know about me, how effectively do you think the listed items would soothe me? • Is there anything you'd add to any of these lists? • Are you willing to help me with any of these things when you recognize that I'm being reactive? Effective, healthy communication is possible for anxiously attached people, and developing these skills can help you develop and build trust and safety in your close relationships. ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Appreciation Journal Appreciation is a wonderful way to build up your relationship capital. You and your partner will feel good spending time acknowledging the ways that you make each other's lives better. List three things you appreciate about your relationship partner: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ List three things you appreciate about yourself: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ Taking time to appreciate each other on a regular basis can build goodwill and help ease you through difficult moments. By focusing on appreciation, understanding, and acceptance and by learning healthy communication, anxiously attached individuals can build strong, healthy relationships in which both people feel safe and secure. ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Avoidance Inventory Listed below are emotions and circumstances that come up in relationships that many have reported can feel stressful. Look through the list and identify which ones are stressful for you. Circle all the experiences that make you shy away, withdraw, distract, numb out, and in general feel less connected to the people around you. If you think of others that aren't on the list, write them in the blank spaces. I'm stressed when I feel . . . Annoyed Disappointed Judged Anxious Disgusted Lonely Ashamed Dismissed Longing/desiring Betrayed Envious Pushed to a limit Blamed Guilt ridden Regretful Burdened Helpless Rejected Condemning Humiliated Resentful Confused Hurt Sad Contemptuous Ignored Self-doubting Criticized Stressed Inadequate Defeated Indignant Unappreciated Demeaned Intimidated Uncomfortable Devastated Intolerant Worried Diminished Jealous Structure/order Security Relief from duties _____ It's stressful when the relationship requires . . . Me to self-disclose Conflict management Repair from injury Me to provide emotional support Clarifying commitment and agreements Me to understand my partner Collaborative decision making Positive ritual and routine Managing other relationships Agreement Boundary defining Giving evaluation accountability and/or receiving feedback _____ I get stressed when I fear . . . Losing autonomy Losing free time Losing my identity Being replaced Being abandoned Being excluded ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Nice work! You've just identified the kinds of events that activate your avoidant attachment. Now, go through your selections and list the top three things that cause you to withdraw. You will work with these three specific triggers in the next exercise. 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Avoidance Pros and Cons Now, you're going to work with the top three triggers for withdrawal or avoidance you identified in the last exercise. Write one trigger at the top of each of the following three tables. Then make a check mark by each reaction you have in response. Finally, you'll explore the ways these behaviors help and hurt your relationships. What do I gain by doing these things? When this happens, I . . . Withdraw Ignore Distract/stay busy Numb out/leave Dismiss myself or others Deny my experience or others' Justify/rationalize Explain something irrelevant Appear without follow-through Other: _____ What do I gain by doing these things? ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. What do I miss out on by doing these things? What is a more constructive response to this trigger? 3. _____ When this happens, I . . . Withdraw Ignore Distract/stay busy Numb out/leave Dismiss myself or others Deny my experience or others' Justify/rationalize Explain something irrelevant Appear without follow-through Other: _____ ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. What do I gain by doing these things? What do I miss out on by doing these things? What is a more constructive response to this trigger? Remember that all of these behaviors were learned. None of them is your fault, but the consequences of these behaviors are your business. If you're satisfied with how these reactions are working for you, then carry on! If you're no longer okay with the results, it's in your power to change the behaviors that cause them. ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. The Effect on You Think of a time you needed help or support from someone specific, and they either were absent or were there but didn't feel entirely present. What was the incident? What do you remember feeling? What thoughts do you remember having? How did your body hold that experience? ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Empathy in Action This exercise can be helpful when you're faced with avoidant behavior that leaves you feeling disappointed or let down. Think of a specific time in your life when someone important felt absent or less engaged when you needed them. Pick an incident that isn't too activating in the present moment. A time someone important to me left me feeling alone was . . . Instead of what they did, I wanted them to . . . The situation was stressful for them, because they have a difficult time with . . . ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. I know this is stressful for them, because . . . They judged themselves or believed that I judged them as . . . But in reality, they are still learning how to . . . and they are not always perfect at it. When they get overwhelmed, they can . . . They react from reflex instead and forget how much I need them. You might practice this with a number of incidents; with practice, you'll develop an approach to dealing with these incidents in real time, and you may also develop a greater understanding of and empathy for your avoidant partner. ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Exploring Needs and Wants Now, explore an issue that you don't feel totally fulfilled by in a specific relationship. If nothing comes to mind that strongly, just make a best guess. The point is to explore your thoughts and desires as they relate to that particular relationship. When I think about this relationship, the thing I don't feel satisfied by is . . . What would make me happy is . . . ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. If I got what I wanted, I would feel . . . How will it affect my relationship in the long term if I never advocate for myself on this issue? RATING SCALE: How much effort am I willing to make to assert myself on this issue? (Circle) 1 10 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very little Complete ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Secure versus Insecure Approach In this exercise, you'll have a chance to pick a decision you've made within a relationship and explore the reasons for making the decision based on secure attachment or insecure attachment. Fill out your own worksheet, beginning with a decision that you've already made pertaining to a relationship. Then put your thoughts and feelings about the decision in the appropriate column. Secure or Insecure. Next, fill out thoughts and feelings that would fit the other category, even if they are hypothetical. The point is to practice identifying whether thoughts and feelings emerge from a secure or an insecure place. ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Decision My Decision is: Insecure approach: Secure approach: Questions to consider: 1. What conditions help you have a secure approach to a relationship? 2. What conditions promote an insecure approach? ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Imagine a Secure Interaction with Conflict Most of us get so caught up in the fast pace of conflict that we sometimes don't notice when the other person is offering an olive branch. When these moments are missed, fights last longer and are more stressful. Recall a time when you were involved with a difficult relationship conflict that didn't go so well, and the other person reacted out of fear or hurt. Remember what this was like—the feelings, thoughts, and body sensations that you experienced in response. What did the other person do that triggered your reaction? Now, imagine that the other person can think and feel beyond himself, instead of just being scared or hurt, and can make an effort to really see your perspective, as well. Imagine the other person as their most generous and compassionate self. The person speaks to you calmly and looks at you with a warm sparkle in their eye. What do you feel now? ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. You probably felt better. This is what happens when we feel that the person we care about can consider us. If so, really let that good feeling in. Now, imagine showing appreciation for the different response. How would you show your appreciation and encourage the other person to keep doing what you see and hear them doing? ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Relationship Strengths What are your strengths and your partner's? As you interact with someone who has a secure attachment style, it can be helpful to remind yourself of your relationship strengths. Think about what you each contribute to the relationship and gifts that you share with one another. If you're not working on a romantic relationship right now, think in terms of whichever significant relationship you have in mind, whether that's a parent, sibling, best friend, or someone else. Now that you've picked a specific relationship, go down the column for "Me" and place a check mark by each trait that is a strength you contribute to the relationship. Then go down the column for "My relationship partner" and do the same for the strengths they bring. The ways in which you each contribute to the relationship may be the same or very different. If they're different, try to acknowledge that some of the ways in which your partner shares those skills and talents may feel unfamiliar at times. If so, try to be open to the new feeling of receiving them in this way, little by little. ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC. Me My relationship partner Strengths Honesty Fairness Willingness to be open Trustworthiness Being a source of inspiration Commitment Collaboration Acceptance of faults Providing support Perseverance through rough times Dependability Consistency Ability to challenge the other in positive ways Playfulness Humor Readiness to express gratitude and appreciation Willingness to sacrifice Other: Other: ATTACHMENT THEORY WORKBOOK © 2019, CALLISTO MEDIA, INC.

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