

Helping Trauma Survivors to Have the Relationships They Deserve

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Two Frameworks

- Shorthand for conceptualizing
 - Reasonable expectations for care of a child – laying the groundwork for clients to comprehend their losses – *The Contract for Care*
 - Themes and patterns of how relationships of all kinds (with particular emphasis on emotionally meaningful relationships) become repeatedly painful – *The Price of Admission*

It's All About Relationships





The book of love is long and boring
No one can lift the damn thing
It's full of charts and facts and figures and
instructions for dancing
But I love it when you read to me
And you can read me anything
The book of love has music in it
In fact that's where music comes from
Some of it's just transcendental
Some of it's just really dumb
But I love it when you sing to me
And you can sing me anything
The book of love is long and boring
And written very long ago
It's full of flowers and heart-shaped boxes
And things we're all too young to know

-Peter Gabriel, *The Book of Love*

Attachment

- Consistency
- Predictability
- Mutuality
- Safety
- Both transcendent and boring

Intergenerational, Developmental, Systemic, Cyclical Trauma

- “They fuck you up your mum and dad, they may not mean to, but they do. They fill you with the faults they had and add some extra just for you.” – Phillip Larkin
- Or to rephrase the line in Leviticus, the sins perpetrated upon the parents are visited on the children, unto the third and fourth generation.
- The book of crappy attachment is long, and complicated, and it’s the only users manual that most survivors of complex trauma get.

“You had my heart inside of your hand
And you played it” – Adele, describing the position of infants and children with less-than-adequate caregivers

Childhood Trauma and Emotionally Meaningful Relationships

- Not mutually exclusive, yet...
 - Attachment wounds
 - Traumatic attachment experiences
 - Complex trauma
- All can contribute to challenges for survivors seeking good-enough connections in adult life
- “The price of admission” relationship beliefs and schemata as a paradigm



You're waiting for the punch line betting it all the joke's
on you, like good is too good to be true

Did it ever once cross your mind, maybe it's just the
real thing?

You say love is a bubble, that any day is bound to pop,
it's a law of gravity the other shoe will drop

While you're looking for seven signs, maybe it's just the
real thing

Well the real thing is gonna steal your unhappy ending,
the real thing is gonna feel like you're pretending, but
the real shame would be to treat the truth like a lie,
when there's no denying you are my real thing.

-Maia Sharp, *Real Thing*

The Real Thing

- For survivors of complex developmental and attachment trauma, Emotionally Meaningful Relationships (EMRs) are like unicorns
- And like those mythical beasts, are idealized, and treated as the pearl of great price – which many survivors feel obligated to pay.

Relationships for Survivors



Prices of Admission

- Core beliefs that one must tolerate to have an EMR
 - Being used by the other person emotionally, financially, professionally
 - Being sexual when you don't want to, whether or not the other person is being coercive or forceful
 - Bad treatment – verbal abuse, emotional neglect, unfaithfulness
 - Permitting the other person to control access to friends, religious practices, use of money
 - Abrogating your right to assess other people or situations
 - Eternal compliance

How Are These Prices of Admission?

- Implicit (rarely explicit) and covert agreements between survivors and the adults in their lives that the connection between survivor and all others (but particularly those with whom EMRs are sought) is contingent on the survivor's willingness to offer and continue paying one of these prices
- Thus, “admission” to the world of emotionally meaningful relationships goes through a toll booth of some kind of misery

Core Beliefs About Self-in-Relationships

- A price must be paid to be kept in relationship to others, and the price will go up and become less possible to successfully pay
 - I'm the problem
 - I'm easy to leave/hurt/betray
- “The first cut is the deepest...But when it comes to lovin' me, they're worst...” (with apologies to Sheryl Crow for adapting her lyric) – that first cut, by a caregiver, is the deepest for survivors

Free Lunch? But Not a Unicorn

- There are prices, and then there are prices
 - Someone being loving yet boring
 - Someone who's continuously forgetful or running behind schedule
 - Occasional badly done conflicts
 - Brief periods of emotional withdrawal due to stress or illness
- These are all the costs of being in connection with other people. Low end, annoying, unpleasant. People are human, fallible, and imperfect.
- These are not the kinds of prices that survivors usually pay relationally

Broken Promises

- Caregivers who engendered survivors' disrupted attachments have broken what I think of as the basic agreement between adults and children of our species.
- Psychoeducation for our clients about why relationships are both so compelling and so painful...

The Contract for Care



The Contract for Care

- Adults must care for the safety and welfare of children
- This contract is a non-optional, evolutionarily-based aspect of being human
 - Humans evolved to be creatures with large brains, which allowed us to create language and abstract thought
 - Our large brains require an extended period of infancy and dependency on adults prior to the capacity for autonomy in comparison with our primate relatives such as bonobos, and even longer when compared with other mammalian species
 - The survival of the human species thus depends on adults keeping this contract
 - Breaking this contract – which is what other-than-adequate caregivers of children have done in some form or another- is a violation of the most basic requirements of humanity.

Looking for love in all the hard places

- We come into the world wired for attachment– it's the evolutionary imperative for infants
- Why?
 - Large brains require many years of development
 - Most of ours as humans happens after birth; our heads are already dangerously large (thus we do not give birth unattended, unlike species whose brains are smaller)
 - That long period of brain development requires an equally long period of dependent attachment on older members of our species
 - Attachment experiences nourish the growth and development of parts of the brain that are unformed at birth and allows our mammalian vagus system to function
 - Thus, attachment is not simply an emotional experience. It is physiological as well.



There's nothing you can do that can't be done
Nothing you can sing that can't be sung
Nothing you can say but you can learn how to play the game
It's easy

All you need is love, all you need is love, all you need is
Love, love, Love is all you need

Love, love, love, Love, love, love, Love, love, love
All you need is love, All you need is love
All you need is love, love, Love is all you need

Nothing you can know that isn't known
Nothing you can see that isn't shown
Nowhere you can be that isn't where you're meant to be
It's easy

-John Lennon and Paul McCartney, *All you need is love*

Good-Enough Attachment

- Good-enough experiences with adult caregivers create secure attachment in children. Outcomes of this include:
 - Core belief that one is loveable
 - Core belief that they are not the sole source of any interpersonal difficulties they encounter
 - Core belief that people will be there for them simply because that's how life is; relationships feel solid
 - Development of neural networks that support relationships with others

Secure Attachment as We Grow Up

- Secure attachment also promotes normative processes of emotional, cognitive, moral, and sexual development in humans.
- Securely attached parent-child pairs have space for the child to differentiate, have her or his own thoughts, feelings, and opinions, develop a sexual self and a sense of personal values.
- Missteps and missed communications are opportunities to know that people can be different and connected, and that after infancy no one can read minds or be perfectly attuned
- Ruptures are repaired; both people want them repaired.
- Psychotherapies can empower survivors to develop earned secure attachment in adulthood

What Survivors Got Instead

- Wasn't good-enough at all
 - Anxiety-provoking
 - Avoidant
 - Disorganizing
 - All attachment experiences that lead to very different core beliefs than those of the securely-attached child
 - Almost everyone with complex trauma and dissociation had disorganizing attachment experiences
 - Nonetheless, drive to attach persists, but with the trauma-created prices woven into relationship beliefs

Love Hurts

- Survivors' adult caregivers claimed to offer love and connection. What they did instead
 - Abuse or neglect
 - Use for a source of narcissistic supply
 - Be unpredictable in their availability and their dangerousness
 - Disengage emotionally
 - Overpower emotionally
 - Be intolerant of normative developmental needs and behaviors (e.g., exploring the world, having a mind or opinions or feelings of one's own)

Interpersonal Effects of Less-Than Adequate Attachment Experiences

- Difficulty reading social cues
- High anxiety related to interacting with others
- Difficulty judging other peoples' motives and trustworthiness
- Risk of misinterpreting what people say and do
- Difficulty setting and respecting boundaries, both own and others'
- Belief that other people are less invested in making a relationship work
- Fear of rupture because there is no belief in the possibility of repair
- Feeling alone, and believing that no one will be there to help

Intrapersonal Effects

- Shame
- Self-hatred
- Difficulty tolerating painful emotions
- Difficulty regulating emotions
- Tendency to avoid or dissociate
- Disturbance of sleep, eating, sexuality
- Difficulties concentrating and focusing
- Not knowing what you feel, think or want
- Problematic self-soothing strategies (over-work, substances, self-inflicted violence, compulsive behaviors)



Turn down the lights, Turn down the bed
Turn down these voices inside my head
Lay down with me, Tell me no lies
Just hold me close, don't patronize
Don't patronize me
'Cause I can't make you love me if you don't
You can't make your heart feel something it won't
Here in the dark, in these final hours
I will lay down my heart and I'll feel the power
But you won't, no you won't
'Cause I can't make you love me, if you don't
I'll close my eyes, then I won't see
The love you don't feel when you're holding me
Morning will come and I'll do what's right
Just give me till then to give up this fight
And I will give up this fight...

Allen Shamblin & Michael Reid *I can't make you love me*, performed by
Bonnie Raitt

“These Voices Inside My Head”

- . To be in a relationship, do you have to give up your safety, your boundaries, your values, your identity? Do you need to walk on eggshells? Or constantly apologize for being human? Do you have to ignore the signals inside you that say that something's wrong and never voice your discomforts? Must you never be angry? Never express disappointment? Be the mirror on the wall saying, “Fairest, fairest”?

“I can't make you love me if you don't”

Or...

You scurry, you scramble, trying to read between the lines. What feat of emotional legerdemain do you have to do to get this one not to leave? Not to be mean to you? Not to show you disgust or contempt? Not to get tired of you? How can you sneak in some of your needs through the back door, where they won't be visible enough for this new person to see them and reject you? What can you do to get this person to sometimes, not always (because you are a realist, after all), be loving and tender to you if they are your partner, respectful and decent if they are your friend? And when they are that, must you tread lightly, ask little, simply be extremely grateful for what you have so that they don't realize the truth that you're too difficult, too much, not worth it after all? Or even worse, must you cringe enough so that you're prepared for the emotional blow when they realize who you really are (not worthy)?

Losing Integrity as the Price of Admission

- You want me to change my hair color? My politics? Okay, sure, whatever you want- just please, please, don't leave me. What do I want for dinner- oh I don't know, whatever you want. You don't like it when I'm not happy with you coming home drunk? I'm sorry, I'll stop complaining. You want to be able to call me names when you're angry? Okay, you have the right to express yourself however you'd like. But please, don't leave. I'm sorry for upsetting you. Really sorry. Please forgive me for not praising you, for not complying with you. You don't want to have a day job because it interferes with your creative process? Okay, I'll work a second job to pay your bills. Just please. Please stay. Don't go.

We Start This Very Young



Giving Up the Fight

- For many survivors the price of relating to other humans comes eventually to seem too high.
- Avoidance, despair, and isolation also have costs
- Human urge to connect almost always breaks through at some point, and dissociation from the source of interpersonal difficulties leaves survivor without skills to repair ruptures
- Therapists must identify and target despair narratives

Time Traveling

- Structural model of dissociation (Steele, Boon, van der Hart, Nijenhuis)
 - EP (Emotional Part of the Personality)- either young emotions frozen in time, memory-carrying parts, adolescent protector/persecutor parts). Live in the past, not yet able to experience anything or anyone in present time
 - ANP (Apparently Normal Personalities) appear to be age of the body, able to use language and reasoning appropriate to chronological age. No relationship to emotional or interpersonal experience, and usually disappear when attachment dynamics are activated to be replaced by EPs).
- For survivors, EPs rule emotionally meaningful relationships—and thus travel back in time with whatever is happening, unable yet to reference the present.
- EPs forged in the crucible of disorganizing attachment where prices were always required for connection to dangerous adult caregivers

EPs Feel Powerful

- Because they live in well-developed and rich neural networks that were laid down in the context of attachment with earliest caregivers
- This does not mean that one can't change how they relate to people, only that it requires intention and mindful engagement
- Giving up paying prices requires the development of new neural networks about connection
- Therapists assist clients in processing the EP relational neural networks and developing new ones (useful here-EMDR, SE, Brainspotting, and other non-verbal and/or somatic therapies)

Presentification

- Living radically in present time
- Bringing EPs into the present
- Developing skills for tolerating the difficult emotions that will emerge and not dissociating from/avoiding those feelings so that one can experience them in present time



Made a wrong turn, once or twice dug my way out, blood and fire
Bad decisions, that's alright welcome to my silly life
Mistreated, misplaced, misunderstood
Miss 'No way, it's all good', it didn't slow me down
Mistaken, always second guessing, underestimated
Look, I'm still around
Pretty, pretty please, don't you ever, ever feel
Like you are less than, less than fuckin' perfect
Pretty, pretty please, if you ever, ever feel like you're nothing
You're fuckin' perfect to me
You're so mean when you talk about yourself, you were wrong
Change the voices in your head make them like you instead
So complicated, look happy, you'll make it
Filled with so much hatred, such a tired game
It's enough, I've done all I can think of
Chased down all my demons, I've seen you do the same
Pretty, pretty please, don't you ever, ever feel
Like you are less than, less than fuckin' perfect
Pretty, pretty please, if you ever, ever feel like you're nothing
You're fuckin' perfect to me

Alecia Moore / Johan Schuster / Max Martin, *Fucking perfect*, performed by Pink

Radical Imperfection

- Only dogs are perfect 😊 (or maybe cats- I am NOT a cat person).
- Humans are utterly, wonderfully, gloriously humanly human-thus, imperfect in every way.
- Imperfection was coded as dangerous during many survivors' childhoods, as their normal humanity was used as an excuse by adults to do terrible and painful things.
- Perfectionism/shame/failure thus part of the dynamic of what survivors expect to pay with in relationships
- Identifying and targeting perfectionism and perfectionistic expectations

Falling Down and Getting Up- Disrupting the “Failure” Narrative

- Try, fall, try again is how humans learn- error, iterate, assess, error, iterate, assess.
- If response to normal process of learning in relationships is dangerous, shaming, or disconnects attachment it's hard to learn that it's okay to learn the way humans learn
- Learned helplessness—no matter what you do there's a negative outcome, which leads to hopelessness and despair
- Creating belief in “a softer place to land” without having to then go on and idealize the other

The Right to a No-Harm No-Foul Fail

- Not part of survivors' experience
- What should be true
 - When kids stumble and fall in the world, good-enough families pick them up, dust them off, and help them learn from the experience
 - Parents can be upset, angry, disappointed AND still loving and connected.
 - In securely attached families, it's a both/and situation
 - Adopting the attitude that you, too deserve this kind of both/and in your relationships with people—not, if imperfect must pay prices

Changing An Inner Working Model of Relationships

- Inner working model- your template for how relationships with other people will happen
 - Think of it as your relational Operating System, like Windows or iOS or Android
- IWM for survivors is of expecting to pay prices in self, safety, money, boundaries
- Remodeling the IWM

Treatment Goals

- Identify and target
 - Price of admission beliefs
 - **Somatic experience that emerges with those beliefs**
 - Because these beliefs emerge from repeated relational traumas, there is not likely to be a specific trauma but
 - There will be an embodied representation of the Price of Admission beliefs (including shut down or dissociation)

Characteristics of a Good Enough Relationship

- To remodel the IWM you need to have a template for your new one
- What to expect in a good-enough relationship
 - Reciprocity
 - Respect
 - Compassion
 - Clear and non-rigid boundaries

Reciprocity

- Or mutuality...by any other name, an interaction in which there is shared commitment to the relationship, shared commitment to give and take, shared commitment to equity
- Not perfectly even all the time, rather, evens out over time because this is the shared goal
- One person does not chronically give or do more than the other.
- You are not there to be “of use” or used- there is mutual sharing of resources, both human and material
- Equal value of both parties

Respect

- For your boundaries, your feelings, your opinions, your values
- NOT agreement; rather, honoring your ways of experiencing the world
- Believing that your “no” means “no”
- Absence of coercive or controlling interpersonal strategies



Oh the sisters of mercy they are not departed or gone
They were waiting for me when I thought that I just can't go on
And they brought me their comfort and later they brought me their song
Oh I hope you run into them you who've been traveling so long
Yes you who must leave everything that you cannot control
It begins with your family but soon it comes round to your soul
Oh I've been where you're hanging I think I can see how you're pinned
When you're not feeling holy your loneliness says that you've sinned
They laid down beside me I made my confession to them
They touched both my eyes and I touched the dew on their hem
If your life is a leaf that the seasons tear off and condemn
They will bind you with love that is graceful and green as a stem

-Leonard Cohen, *Sisters of Mercy*

Compassion

- The big enchilada, and one of the hardest emotions for survivors to feel for themselves
- Compassion is not pity or feeling sorry for yourself
- So what is it?

Compassion 101

- Observing yourself and others and the world without negative judgment
- Simply noticing what is happening
 - I have a sensation in my body
 - I notice my behavior
- Noticing your own problematic behaviors without shame, self-blame, or self-hatred
 - I tend to avoid difficult interactions by disappearing into a book
- Radical in-the-present-moment experience
 - EPs struggle against compassion because it stops the time-travel
- Developing capacities via therapy and mindfulness practices for self-compassion and compassionate self-observation

Old IWM Rules – No Boundaries

- The IWM has rules; those of survivors require relational prices
- *Don't be selfish* instead of “If I'm not for myself, who am I for?”
- *Be loyal only to the other person*, instead of being loyal to yourself as well
- *Don't know what you want, think, or feel*, instead of building the relationship on the core of your desires and feelings.
- *Give in to the other person*, instead of have your boundaries respected, be able to negotiate and be met in the middle

You Have to Have a Self

- To have a relationship with another human being
- Many survivors pay the price of being without-a-self
 - “I’ll do anything to keep you”
 - “I’ll be whoever you want me to be”
- Integrity or attachment- an intolerable choice that is familiar to survivors



Looks like we've been butting heads again, baby, lately seems like all we ever do
Can't remember when things got so crazy, All I know is I don't know what to do
I guess we oughta stop and think it over Decide if what we want there's enough of
It's tearing us apart, it cuts right through the heart It's an unintended consequence of
love

Remember how we fell into each other, baby Was all we could do to get up out of bed
You used to say nobody loved you better I used to hang on every word you said
What happened to those brave and tender lovers How could we break the mighty
promise of?

I guess time wore us down, expectations run aground It's an unintended consequence of
love

Now baby, I'm the one that's taking chances I know we've got a love worth fighting for
Let's drop them petty games and pick up dancing Get back to where we're wanting
nothing more

I'm calling on you, baby, now or never Let's dig in deep and get out of this rut

We'll get back to what brought us both together, baby And find a way to resurrect our
strut

'Cause baby, you're my brave and tender lover I know we'll find the mighty promise of

So come on, baby, back We'll get this love on track

You're my one intended consequence of love

Jonathan Healy and Bonnie Raitt, *Unintended consequence of love*

Saner Relationships

- Both people want each other to have integrity
- Both people expect that they will have to ask for what they want, not have their mind read
- Neither person expects the other to disappear into them
- Each person is willing to hear “no”
- Both parties can be flexible without losing definition, negotiate without giving up bottom lines
- Fusion is unnecessary; it’s a barrier to genuine closeness
- Ruptures can be repaired, and usually are

A Cut-Off is Not a Boundary

- Cut-offs occur when people struggle to tolerate difference
- May be necessary for the sake of safety (e.g., if prior perpetrator continues to put you at risk), but generally only serve to keep people in a negative relationship with one another characterized by avoidance
- Cut-offs avoid conflict. Boundaries require negotiation in which conflict can and often does occur
- Cut-offs and compliance are the polarities of the trauma-created IWM. Both are part of reenactments.

And a Boundary is Not a Cut-Off

- If your IWM leads to unconscious expectation of abandonment, other peoples' boundaries may be difficult for you to tolerate.
 - You being abandoned was frequently paired with your caregiver violating your boundaries- “If you really loved me you wouldn't say no.”
- IWM's fantasy of being loved is of being fused—no boundaries for anyone
 - This is, in fact, the experience of secure attachment for an infant. It is something that naturally falls away as the securely attached infant gets older and develops boundaries
- Creates reenactments in which survivor is rejected and labeled as a boundary-violator because boundaries are felt as intolerable

Play it Again

- Because the IWM affects how survivors perceive others, reenactments in relationships are common
- Reenactments
 - Replaying old dynamics of victim, rescuer, persecutor, bystander, in present time
 - Feels “right” because it taps into limbic resonances of deep neural networks of other-than-secure attachment patterns

Stepping Away from Reenactments

- Think of reenactment as a runaway truck barreling down on you
- In the past, you are frozen and get run over by the truck, wounded but not killed
- Mindful awareness of reenactments allows you to step away from the path of the truck
- You can even jump into the driver's seat and drive the truck- you can have choice in your interactions with others

How Do I Know I'm In a Reenactment?

- Here I go again
- I know how this will end
- I've been here before
- Various EPs are engaged by stepping into reenactments, and they will signal the familiarity of the truck rushing toward you.
- Not a reenactment- "This feels weird. Odd, but good. Not sure what's happening."

Limbic Resonances

- Limbic system-
 - Pre-human, older part of brain that is responsible for identifying danger, integrating emotional and cognitive components of memory
 - Forms neural networks associated with attachment in which two people's neurohormonal systems mutually regulate
 - When in a reenactment our limbic system recognizes what's happening as "normal," and resonates with it even when our conscious self is shouting, "no!"

Not the Price...

- Limbically resonant interactions will likely come with prices
- Mindfulness about one's emotional responses to an interaction will assist in pulling out of unconscious decisions to offer or agree to pay a price
- Installing the “slow-down switch”

Gender and Culture

- Affect prices people expect themselves to pay
 - In western cultures, women expected to nurture and put up with bad behavior from partner, men expected to show no vulnerable feelings or needs—thus the prices paid will often reflect people's relationship with gender narratives
 - In some cultures there are expectations of certain kinds of selflessness that, as a relationship price, appear in the form of sacrifice of the self

An Identity, Not a Prison

- If someone says or implies that you are a bad or failed _____ (woman, man, member of your ethnic or spiritual community) because you are being for yourself as well as others, setting boundaries, and stepping out of reenactments, pay attention!
- That's an attempt at control using the tool of your identity. You're being invited to continue to pay a price. Just say no.

Next Step-Assessment

- Trust is an earned phenomenon
- In survivors' families, caregivers demanded trust while behaving in non-trustworthy ways
- Survivors' capacities to assess whether other people were or were not trustworthy was damaged
- This creates more risk of paying relationship prices
- People can learn to assess others for their worthiness of trust
- Installing an inner assessor



Faithless love like a river flows, Raindrops falling on a broken rose
Down in some valley where nobody goes
And the night blows in like the cold dark wind
Faithless love like a river flows

Faithless love where did I go wrong, Was it telling stories in a heartbreak
song, Where nobody's right and nobody was wrong
Faithless love will find you and the misery entwine you
Faithless love where did I go wrong

Well I guess I'm standing in the hall of broken dreams
That's the way it sometimes goes
Whenever a new love never turns out like it seems
I guess the feeling comes and goes

Faithless love like a river flows, Like raindrops falling on a broken rose
Down in some valley where nobody goes
Faithless love has found me, thrown its chilly arms around me
Faithless love like a river flows

JD Souther, *Faithless love*, performed by Linda Ronstadt

Faithless Love

- In addition to being born with the imperative to attach, humans are born hard-wired to detect lying and cheating. “Cheater detectors” are important component of assessing trustworthiness
- In survivors’ families of origin children are given an impossible choice- be attached or notice that you are experiencing “cheating” in the form of abuse or neglect
- Almost always, attachment is more important knowing that you’ve been cheated

Betrayal Trauma

- Betrayal Trauma Theory (BTT) demonstrates how attachment dynamics affect capacity to assess people
 - Child has the evolutionary imperative to be attached to their adults, and will engage in almost any means to do so
 - Unknowing (dissociating) betrayal is one of those means employed by children being abused by their adult care-givers
 - Adults can also have these experiences- development of “Betrayal Blindness”

Was Blind But Now I See

- Betrayal blindness is a class of prices of admission to relationship in which a survivor is unable to know small and large betrayals
- If other person is gaslighting, you smell the gas but continue to accept their explanations
- Installing trust in one's own perceptions
- Processing the experiences of having trust violated and being misled/confused/gaslighted in early relationships with caregivers

Cheater Detectors are Great Assessment Tools

- Turning yours back on assists you in assessing the trustworthiness of others
 - You can pay attention to what it feels like for you to relate to that person
 - You can notice prices
 - You can notice how they treat other people
 - Usually the best information about how you will be treated comes from their stories of how they treated other people
 - Example- two stories I should have listened to- MLV and SFS

Experiment for You and Your Clients

- Try to pick two people you know of (you don't have to know them personally; they can even be fictional characters) who you believe exemplify the capacity to treat others with respect and decency
- Write down the characteristics they have that lead you to this belief. Notice that some of the following are likely to be true of them.

These people said what they were going to do and did it. There was transparency and a keeping of commitments. No smoke and mirrors.

Those people took responsibility for their own actions. They made few if any excuses, and when they did, it was reasonable and called for by unusual circumstances

When they screwed up and were less than decent and honorable, they said so, and took initiative to repair the breach.

You don't hear them say, "You made me do that."

These people were relatively consistent. They weren't rigid, but you could predict with some degree of certainty how they would respond to most people and situations.

These people had pretty good mastery of their emotions in most circumstances. They did not yell or explode at others as a matter of course, and they were also not shut down.

You didn't have to guess at what was going on with them and they didn't over-share either.

These people were genuinely curious about others. They listened with no pre-determined assumptions about what they would hear, and they responded to what was being said, not to whatever monologue was happening in their own heads.

These people never, ever used violence to solve problems. No matter how angry or upset they were, they never resorted to violence, verbal, emotional, or physical. They did not call anyone names, put anyone down, use sarcasm or contempt to silence someone.

These people held whatever authority they had in a collaborative and, where possible, empowering manner. They did not abdicate authority when they had it, and they were not authoritarian, either.

These people had some insight into themselves. They did their best to understand who they were and what motivated them. They were as transparent to themselves as they knew how to be.

Assessing Reduces Prices

- When people learn to assess others using these and other similar criteria they begin to pay less prices in your relationships
- Notice- the kinds of relationships offered by people with these characteristics are very different from those survivors had growing up and many they've had as an adult

Prices vs. Consequences

- Not paying prices does not mean being consequence-free
 - You're human. You'll say and do things that are hurtful to others
 - Clean amends (yes I did that, yes it was painful for you, yes, it was not okay) are difficult for survivors to offer because shame, self-blame, and self-hatred—as well as fear of punishment and abandonment—often accompany the knowledge that you've not been perfect

Not Alone Forever

- Because of early attachment wounds, many survivors have a core belief that if they do not pay a price for relationships that they will be alone forever.
- Harder to stop paying prices as we get older and the apparent opportunities for new connections or healing longstanding ones seem to become less
- And...this belief is part of PTSD, the “sense of a foreshortened future” in which nothing good can ever happen (unless you pay for it through the nose)

The Emotional Whole Truth

- If a person is paying prices all the time then they're alone even though there are people around
- Risks of paying prices in relationships
 - Physical
 - Psychological
 - Spiritual
- Risks of giving up prices
 - Finding out your EPs were wrong
 - Finding out that some people don't want you to pay
 - Finding out that some people did require prices (which you were beginning to know anyhow because your cheater detectors were coming back online)



Hold on, hold on to yourself, for this is gonna hurt like hell
Hold on, Hold on to yourself, you know that only time will tell
What is it in me that refuses to believe this isn't easier than the real thing
My love, you know that you're my best friend
you know I'd do anything for you
my love, let nothing come between us, my love for you is strong and true
Am I in heaven here or am I...at the crossroads I am standing
So now you're sleeping peaceful, I lie awake and pray
that you'll be strong tomorrow and we'll, see another day and we will praise it
and love the light that brings a smile across your face

Sara McLachlan *Hold on*

Pain, Not Harm

- To tolerate good-enough relationships and give up paying prices, survivors must learn to tolerate unpleasant emotional experiences
- Think of it as psychological Pilates
 - Hurts like heck, and stretches and strengthens you.
 - Hold on to yourself

Developing Skills

- Emotion regulation
 - Differentiating between being in an EP's emotions and what you feel in the present
- Distress tolerance
 - Differentiating between the actual danger you were in when emotions were evoked in the past and the absence of danger most of the time in the present
- Presentification
 - Getting into the here and now
- Learning to identify what you think, feel, smell, taste, know, hear, see
- Resourcing the DBT skills

Teaching and Insisting on Safety

- From people who would exploit or harm relationally or physically
- From risks of relapse into old reenactment patterns that could put saner relationships in jeopardy
- Developing a safety plan with clients and resourcing the inner superhero/lifeguard/Lassie

Identify Themes of Typical Prices

- What is this person most likely to pay with for connection?
 - Integrity
 - Physical safety
 - Boundaries
 - Money
 - Values
- Develop your safety plan for each area of risk

Learn How to Have and Tolerate Conflicts

- In relationships where prices are required there may be abuse or violence- these are not conflicts
 - Contempt, stonewalling, sarcasm, put-downs, all not conflict tactics but control tactics
- People may have paid the price for conflict avoidance by complying repeatedly
- Saner relationships have conflict because both people have boundaries, and know what they think, feel, and know—which will differ
- A new view of conflict- *an attempt to mutually repair a rupture in the fabric of connection*



Wounded heart I cannot save you from yourself
Though I wanted to be brave it never helped
'Cause your trouble's like a flood ragin' through your veins
No amount of love's enough to end the pain
Tenderness and time can heal a right gone wrong
But the anger that you feel goes on and on
And it's not enough to know that I love you still
So I'll take my heart and go for I've had my fill
If you listen you can hear the angel's wings
Up above our heads so near they are hovering
Waiting to reach out for love when it falls apart
When it cannot rise above a wounded heart
When it cannot rise above a wounded heart

Jude Johnstone, *Wounded heart*, performed by Bonnie Raitt

Grief for What Won't Be - Opening to What Is

- Grieving what was stolen by anxiety-provoking, avoidant, and disorganizing caregivers
- Stop saving emotional space for them, and for people in your life today who require prices
- Trust grief
 - “Wounds heal from the bottom up and the inside out. They must be kept open, inspected” (Marilyn McMahan, Viet Nam veteran, poet and PTSD survivor)



I made a promise to myself, Locked it away deep down inside
Told my heart we'd wait it out, Swore we'd never compromise
Oh I'd rather be alone, Like I am tonight
Than settle for the kind of love, That fades before the morning light
Silence stared me in the face And I finally heard its voice
It seemed to softly say That in love you have a choice
Today I got the answer And there's a world of truth behind it
Love is out there waiting somewhere You just have to go and find it
I believe in love, I believe in love A love that's real, love that's strong
Love that lives on and on Yes I believe in love

The Dixie Chicks, *I believe in love*

In Love You Have a Choice

- In survivors' families of origin there were no choices for children
- EPs carry that experience of no-choice and the core belief in the absence of choice
 - Processing the repeated relational traumas in those EPs
 - Resourcing the capacity for choice and the safety inherent in choice
 - Resourcing a felt sense of love that includes choice 💡

Some Light Reading

- Boon, S. & Steele, K (2013). *Coping with trauma-related dissociation: Skills training for patients and therapists*. New York NY: W. W. Norton.
- Brown, L.S. (2015). *Not the price of admission: Healthy relationships after childhood trauma*. Createspace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Brown, L.S. (2012). *Your turn for care: Surviving the aging and death of the adults who harmed you*. Createspace Independent Publishing Platform.