

Healing from chronic emotional mis-attunement

How to stop covering your ache of emotional aloneness
with self-sufficiency and achievement

*"It's no measure of health to be well adjusted to a
family or culture that requires you to abandon
your emotional needs to belong."*

Many people walked on eggshells around a parent growing up, and are puzzled as to why they are struggling in adulthood. When caregivers are consumed with their own anxiety or triggered reactions, they fail to meet their child's needs of attention and care. This little 't' trauma is a trauma of omission. It is about what the child did not receive, so they don't know what they are missing. "How are you feeling?" "It's OK that you are sad," "Sorry I just hurt you," were hardly uttered in these homes. When this failing happens repeatedly over years, the child eventually goes numb to their longing for co-regulation and to be known. Many cope with relentless self-sufficiency, making sure to hide when they are feeling emotionally overwhelmed. It's just not safe to be vulnerable when struggling. The go-to strategies of achievement and perfectionism at the cost of self-abandonment become the norm.

On the outside, many of these families look enviable, with cars in both garages and two parents at home paying for private school. So when comments like: "What, that bothers you?" "You don't really feel that" "Stop being so sensitive," are common-place, the child resorts to thinking: "What's wrong with me? Why is this so hard? This is nothing compared to real abuse—it must be me." Denying they feel gut-punched when dismissed by their Mom or Dad. Resisting their healthy yearning to feel felt. These early wounds of emotional abuse can then be re-triggered in adulthood in marriages with partners who are less attuned, being single for much longer than you want to be, dealing with older parents, and toxic team cultures at work too.

Chronic emotional aloneness and self-doubt can lead to depression, substance abuse, personality disorders, complex attachment trauma, and irritable bowel syndrome to name a few. Often the ones mis-attuning to us, had it harder, never learning emotional nurturing skills themselves, and thus the cycle of emotional abuse marches forward. Blame becomes a meaningless concept when you see how generational trauma was perpetuated through the years.

The great news is that adults can heal from this relational trauma. In the last 20 years many new therapies and techniques have come on the horizon like co-regulating in the midst of emotional overwhelm. As well as attuning to one's inner wisdom that inherently knows how to heal itself. The process of ATTUNE combines the best components of these therapies to help one heal little 't' trauma from chronic emotional mis-attunement.

Chronic mis-attunement happens in such a wide variety of scenarios. Some of us were bullied by an older sibling, or a parent was chronically depressed and unavailable, or our ideas were perpetually invalidated or gaslit at our church. Others were unconsciously put in the role of "emotional caretaker" for their parent or indirectly encouraged to ease family conflict by stifling their emotional reactions. At the micro level, 1000s and 1000s interactive episodes of mis-attunement can gradually accumulate and flood one's body with stress hormones. Our limbic system stays engaged and we are in survival mode most of the time. This may even be more deleterious to empathetic type people.

When this invalidation or dismissal happens repeatedly it creates a trauma of omission. It's about what you did not get so you don't know you are missing it. One learns: "No one is going to help me when I'm feeling down, failing at something, or feeling left out. I have to turn my feelings off on my own." Abandoning our inner emotional life in service of what others are comfortable seeing in us, or what professional cultures reward.

Attunement is to show some interest in another's interior world. Seeking to understand how another has been impacted by something they've experienced. What an experience has meant to them. Attunement is to put yourself in another's shoes and feel some of what they are feeling. You either imagine how it must feel for them. Or you connect with the place in yourself that also knows their experience. In order to be able to linger in another's experience for a bit, one needs to be in touch with their own emotional landscape. When one can't linger in their own hurts, delights, disappointments and yearnings, and it's harder to make contact with another's.

Attunement is about connecting to the good stuff too! To really see how another thrives. To see, know, feel and delight in what lights them up, their energy, their warmth. Honoring where they get energy from, how their heart opens, when their brain is making connection, problem-solving and getting creative. What makes them squeal. Honoring where they get energy from. How their heart opens. Delighting in their delight even when it's not what does it for you.

There is no singular psychological term for the experience of chronic emotional mis-attunement. Related terms are attachment trauma, relational trauma, little 't' trauma, emotional neglect, emotional abuse, invisible trauma, complex trauma, parentified children, adult children of emotionally immature parents or an adult child of an alcoholic. It's important to mention that chronic mis-attunement also regularly happens at systemic, institutional and cultural levels. Those in marginalized groups who were not born into families with more access to people with connections, influence and material resources, can get mis-attuned to for their racial identity, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical disability, bank account, health status, weight, height and attractiveness. They are then blamed for not achieving in realms that they were not given access to. Made to feel ashamed for just existing in the body, mind, or circumstances they were born into, but never chose. When people's inner experience is not understood and attuned to, a tremendous amount of unnecessary stress and innumerable amounts energy, potential and life force are wasted. Emotional mis-attunement happens with this cultural, systemic and institutional oppression as well as through overt traumas like physical abuse, sexual abuse, war, and poverty.

This article is going to focus in on the mis-attunement that comes from well-meaning close family members, community members or colleagues who are trying, but falling short. The covert mis-attunement that comes when perpetrators don't realize they are doing it. Many have experienced parents who did their best, yet due their own stress, generational trauma or lower self-awareness and empathy – inflicted quite a bit of emotional hurt on their kids.

My intention with this article, is to describe and validate this trauma of omission that goes unnoticed in those who have it and those who are treating it. I'll then walk through some techniques and tools that can help with healing and recovering from emotional neglect and heal from chronic mis-attunement.

When we are attuned to, it soothes our distress, helps us connect to ourselves, and is the glue for relating and belonging with others. Children need attunement throughout their development. They look to adults for a variety of human needs from shelter to affection. When crying or

scared, children need to co-regulate with a calm adult to soothe their nervous system. When kids are chronically mis-attuned to by those that are supposed to be caring for them, their development gets stunted. A child's sense of self, ability to self-regulate and connection to others doesn't develop well. The earlier it happens and the more instances and close others that don't attune, the adverse effects are heightened. This need for attunement extends into adulthood. When people are chronically mis-attuned to in a marriage, or have an undermining boss, or go on 100s of online dates over years with little connection, it can take a toll.

Mis-attunements are normal. We are mis-attuning to others and being mis-attuned to throughout our days. Some of us more than others. We can't expect partners, parents, colleagues, friends and social media to be catering to our emotional needs all the time. Standing up for yourself, not taking things personally, commanding what you need, rolling with some punches are necessary skills for navigating our social and professional worlds. Yet just as we need food, and some fasting can be good for the body's resilience, it's not healthy to go too long without eating. It's also not healthy for your mind, spirit and heart to go too long without being seen, known and understood. Emotional attunement is basic nourishment. Yes you can make due without it, and it even builds helpful grit, but you miss vital nutrients if you go too long without. With too much disconnection you end up using compensatory strategies to get by in the short term, but they cost you in the long term. You'll close your heart or over-work and become more compartmentalized and not integrated.

A client said to me yesterday: "To get through my days as a partner at my law firm and Mom of three teenagers, I push a big part of myself down. If I'm honest I feel overwhelmed every morning. I'm in too deep and just need to keep it all up. It's satisfying to be praised for being so efficient and effective in life, but I have to be a robot to get through. I try and do less and cut things out, but I'm in too deep. I can never cut enough."

I believe we would have more fulfilled lives and do less damage to the earth and others, if we operated more from our wholeness, humanity and authenticity. Not from a self-abandoned undernourished state. Busying ourselves with little dopamine hits of succeeding and achievement throughout the day while we over-consume.

Attunement can be thought of in three steps: 1) attention, 2) availability, and 3) responsiveness. Attention is to put your focus on someone else. It's to really listen to what another is saying and to read their facial expressions, body language, and voice tone. And to try and cognitively put yourself in their shoes. You don't need to agree with them or excuse their missteps, but to attend to how they are experiencing things. Second, availability is to open to and receive the other person. To let their perspective and feelings in so you know them or feel them just a bit. Imagine their situation happening to you, or remember a time something similar happened and feel just 20% of what they might be feeling for a few seconds. You don't need to agree with them, or completely know or feel what they feel. You just need to see and understand how their current reality affects them. 3) Responsiveness is to care a bit. It's to feel a little warmth or affection in the midst of their struggle. To accept them and see their strengths. And you can say a kind word or even offer to help. "Awe, that sucks. I feel you. It see how hard this is. I'm sorry you have to go through this. You are not alone. I'm here with you."

Charmaine's family looked like a model family on the outside. Her parents went to Stanford and UC Berkeley, and she and her sister were academically, athletically and socially successful. Charmaine went on to be a physician and her sister an architect, both respected in their fields and both married with kids. But Charmaine remembers having to hide her dark moody side to

her family. So many hours spent crying under her pillow in her bed. She never remembers being hugged or told “I love you,” yet she does remember harsh judgement by her Mom when her exuberance got too high: “What’s wrong with you?” Or her warmth being used by her alcoholic depressed Dad who would hold her hand on the couch or unload all his emotional woes and needs on her. In retrospect, she shudders at how creepy it all felt. But it was all she knew. Over the years she learned to just achieve, achieve, achieve in sports and school to get the positive attention she so craved. Running up to her room when she got home, crying about social rejections of the day, composing herself before she went out into the common space. “It’s selfish to be sad,” was the message she got. Her sister was the popular pretty one who was consumed with boys and clothes. She remembers hundreds of times laying full splayed across their dog, holding on for dear life to cope with her ‘big feelings’, as it was the one being in the home she could co-regulate with. As an adult Charmaine’s life is enviable on the outside, running a whole ward at the hospital, training residents. Mothering her kids so well. But deep down if she ever stops, she can feel a constant state of overwhelm, shame, depression and hopelessness. The message just got in too deep when she was young. “You are not normal. You are too much. Get your shit together. Don’t bother me with your needs. Listen to and help me with all my needs. I’m not going to protect you from your Dad. Make sure you look good to my friends.” The implicit message she got (but not her sister), your emotions are too much, your face and hair look funny, you are unloveable as you are. So as an adult she doesn’t ever stop to feel this pit of despair underneath.

When we attune with others, we allow our own internal state to shift, to come to resonate with the inner world of another. This resonance is at the heart of the important sense of “feeling felt” that emerges in close relationships. We need attunement to feel secure and to develop well in childhood. Throughout our lives we need attunement to feel close and connected.

Ways that mis-attunement happens:

Some of the main ways that mis-attunement manifests are the caregiver or close other: 1) shames both warm and struggling authentic reactions and expressions, 2) has low self-regulation ability and is preoccupied with their own distress, 3) has low self-awareness and empathy skills, 4) has unrealistic standards & mental rigidity, 5) their self-esteem is built on being emotionally stoic and they are shaming of those who show weakness, 6) is physically absent, 7) is intrusive, crosses boundaries, or domineering/punitive. There are many other ways, but these give you a flavor.

A very common way people are mis-attuned to is when their natural vulnerable expression gets shamed. This can be their expression of positive things like Charmaine remembers her Mom criticizing her women friends behind their back, shaming their boisterous and excited expressions. Charmaine learned to keep her exuberant “Tigger” nature under wraps at a very young age. Rick Hanson said on his podcast Being Well that he remembers feeling a ton of love inside him that was just dying to get out. When he’d be affectionate with his Mom and Dad he remembers their discomfort with his emotional displays, so he learned to not show them.

Negative displays are the expression that are more commonly shamed. Kate remembers feeling bad for feeling down. As a teenager she’d often feel moody and was told it was her fault that she would be feeling better if she made better choices. So not only did she feel low, but she was shamed for feeling low. Insult added to injury. As an adult, she now sees that her Mom’s chronically inability to attune to her inner state led to some of her depressed feelings. Kate couldn’t help but question herself, think her Mom was right at times, and think it was her fault

that she was feeling down. Her Mom used to always say when Kate was struggling: "I know you better than you know yourself. Just wait until you are a Mom, then you will understand." This gaslighting was so confusing. Kate's Mom didn't have the empathic ability to see that her daughter had internal reactions to life that were different than her own. Kate's Mom's love was palpable, but she could never attune to her when her emotions were different than her own. This is a classic example where: *"Love is not the same as attunement."* Kate remember just feeling invisible and often thinking... "Why did you have me, if you have no interest in actually knowing me?"

We are all making attunement mistakes. Even empaths who are naturally better at it. I believe our task is to bring more and more awareness to it in our relationships. Attunement leads to connection and effective co-regulation and bonding. Mis-attunement involves lower self-awareness and lower empathy skills. People have less of these for many reasons. One case is when a parent has Asperger's traits or is on the spectrum and has less ability to intuit others internal states. Other parents are too pre-occupied by their own anxiety, PTSD, bipolar, substance abuse, or generational trauma. Or some by the stress of their own food, income, or housing instabilities and insecurities. One form of generational trauma that happens in families, workplaces, the military etc... is the message: "My childhood, training or background was way worse than what you are dealing with. I made it through. You are less than if you can't. I did not have the privilege to get my emotional needs connected to and met. I had to buck up and deal. It's weak to need more." And thus the cycle of generational trauma is perpetuated. I see people all the time who have endured worse abuse, often then cannot be as compassionate and connected to another's 'lighter abuse.' Happens a lot in marriages too. But this is not the answer. To make others suffer the way you had to suffer. Or to not validate little 't' trauma because it's not the worse. It's kicking the can down the road. And soon there may be no more road. Most wars are started by men who haven't dealt with their being chronically mis-attuned to.

Sven's Mom was supermom in so many ways. She gave her life for her kids. So much self-sacrifice. But man was she bad when you were emotionally struggling. She was amazing if you were physically hurt and had to go to the hospital. Totally advocating for you, getting you the best care. But the second you were emotionally hurting or emotionally needing something, there was shaming of your emotional hurts. It was all about her emotional reaction to your life situation, not yours. I had anxiety and panic. And no son of hers was going to have that. To her, if he was struggling anxiety, that meant she was a bad Mom, and she couldn't handle that. How would that look to others? I was blamed and shamed. "You are not that bad. Get out there and deal. Get over it. "

Some never learned self-compassion to not blame themselves so much when their kids are struggling and therefore be able to be more open to actually attuning to their kids emotional needs. Minds that have a harder time with uncertainty and feel safer when conforming to rigid ideas and rules also leads to mis-attunement of the young and vulnerable.

Another category of mis-attunements are unrealistic standards. When a parent learned from their background to associate their own self-worth or sense of safety with achievement, their image to others, or conforming to certain rules or moral codes. This then leads them to be all too invested in their children succeeding in these realms too. These parents' thoughts and emotions about who they want their children to be, become more important than who their children actually are.

The caregiver sometimes uses psychological control like withholding love and affection, making the child feel guilty, invalidating the child's feelings or denying their reality. "I didn't say that" "Stop being so sensitive" "You don't feel that way" are heard all too often. When the parents get too domineering and controlling, this disempowers the child to think and feel for themselves.

"I always felt hung out to dry. The expectation was that I should succeed in a certain area of school or relationships, but then I didn't have the skill set to do it. I was dropped in the deep end and just had to figure many things out. I built a lot of grit and self-reliance. And I really trust myself and am quite capable. I just felt so overwhelmed and alone. Hopelessly depressed. Stuck. Feeling ashamed that I wasn't winning. The cost has been too high. I just naturally hang myself out to dry and don't even know I'm doing it. There was no acknowledgement of how I felt completely overwhelmed and buried, or judged and shamed, or like a failure for not being able to do it, or morally bad that I would even crave or desire something not within the rules, or less than because I couldn't live up to moral perfection. I would feel alone in these feelings, self-pity, hopeless, stuck, low self worth. "Well I wouldn't let them make me feel that way." All I needed was "I see you are overwhelmed. Yes it really is hard. What do you need?" Go show up to this thing because this guy would be there. He then would reject me. I was dying for connection. My needs were all channeled through this one route.

Helicopter parents, and those needing to know everything about the child's whereabouts and friends when it is no longer age appropriate can be serving the parent's anxious needs, rather than the teen's needs for self-connection, individuation and life exploration.

When a caregiver is physically absent, emotional neglect can ensure. When there is a lack of emotional and mental availability for the child because they are just not there. No co-regulation happening for healthy development and self-soothing.

Another category of relational trauma is when a caregiver has poor boundaries and is overly intrusive. When a caregiver treats a child more like an equal or a friend. Shares their life struggles and leans on child for emotional support. This can get to the level of explosive with rage. Or too much leniency, doing drugs with the child, or having no structure, containment or support. The caregiver can treat the child like a surrogate partner looking to the child for comfort, support and intimacy. As a doctor, Min Ta spent 1000's of hours in her 20's catering to all of her Dad's medical issues from his alcoholism. Continually guilted in to be the confident and decision maker while she was in med school and had an infant. Caregivers can also objectify the child's body and physical appearance in a way that sexualizes them.

Jung-jun was brought over from Korea at one and a half. Her Dad cheated on her Mom and to repair this she was allowed to get a girl after her three boys. She was meant to be the cute little Asian girl who doted on her white Mom. A token adoptee. Jung-jin can actually remember seeing her adopted mother for the first time at one and a half and screaming "No." She knew this woman was not getting her for her, but rather to fulfill her emotional needs.

Steven an executive at Google says that his body gets anxious when he starts to relax. He remembers being in his childhood home. His Mom had a sense of when he was getting too comfortable in the house. Once he sat down to do homework or something, she'd come in and make him move or do some chores. He could never just sit and 'be.' It was a struggle to get any reading done in that house. She was not comfortable being in her own skin, so then wouldn't allow him to be in his. Between the summers in high-school he remembers having a day job and a night job. Why? He thinks to himself now. His high-school was free. Mis-attunement to a

child's need to connect with themselves. To this day, it's hard for him to relax and allow himself to just be.

Attunement is to genuinely care about someone, their wellbeing and enjoyment of life separate from you, and your impact on them. It's not just asking about their day as a courtesy, but truly listening and caring about their response.

How mis-attunement affects you:

So what are the consequences of this trauma of omission? Why is this so bad? A lot of this stuff is pretty normal in many households. What's the big deal? Two hallmark features of chronic mis-attunement are *emotional aloneness* and *self-doubt*. They didn't receive any 'real' abuse, so they think they have nothing to complain about. "Others have it so much worse. I shouldn't complain." They also feel really alone in their pain. This emotional aloneness and self-doubt can affect one's:

- 1) Self-regulation: It hurt one's ability to self-regulate. This impact their enjoyment of their life and can cause mental illness like depression
- 2) Self-worth: It affects one's self-esteem and gives one a lower sense of self-worth
- 3) Relationships: It can make feel emotionally alone and hard for one to truly connect and relate with others.

One way to think about trauma is that is it an experience you have where you have felt emotionally overwhelmed and alone in the feelings. It's also to feel helpless about your ability to take action and shift things. With trauma one feel a loss of connection to oneself, and sometimes one's family or the world around them. So little 't' trauma, this trauma of omission, what was not done for you, are moment you felt emotionally flooded and alone in it.

Michelle felt like she had the ideal childhood until age 12. Then as she was having more of her own thoughts, they did not align with the Christian religion her parents were in. She was told her thinking and feeling was wrong so many times by the elders, that she started to not trust her own intuition. She learned to doubt her own gut feelings and intuitions. Then she felt more accepted by her family and church. She chose connection with others over connection with herself. She chose connection with her family and church over her own intuition about psychological safety. A choice the children often make. When she married at 18, she was primed to rationalize the mis-treatment of her young aggressive husband. When the aggression slowly transformed into actual physical abuse, she was so practiced at denying her own intuition, that she would kind of believe him when he said he didn't just throw her across the kitchen. Now she is light-years away from that background, an author, speaker and sought out by the United Nations, Google and many others. But it's been a long journey. And to this day she still struggles to stay in connection to her own intuition. When colleagues have a little narcissism, she can sometimes get fooled. She is so practiced at rationalizing others usurping her needs she can fall into that pattern without even realizing she is doing it.

This self-doubt and questioning of one's reality is just so pervasive. Jocelyn, Charmaine, Kate, Steven, Michelle and countless others all say the same thing. They question themselves as to if their parent was right, and they are too sensitive, and they just shouldn't complain. And in

adulthood there is rampant self-gaslighting. Blaming themselves for struggling and not being happier.

I think condoning emotional neglect and emotional abuse that are so rampant in our society is not the answer. Turning everyone into resilient, stoic robots is not human. We have emotions and sensitivities for good reason. It's how we nurture, connect, know what's important to us and do relationship. It's one of the more beautiful, integrative and alive parts of being human. If there were people out there making decisions to hurt others and cause wars had been attuned to better in their whole background, there just might be more peace on this earth. If we could nurture the humans and their needs and their humanity on this earth a little better, maybe they would treat the earth better and not consume so much.

People are trying to get their emotional needs met through achievement – burning themselves out, using up resources on the planet too much, not connecting in truly nourishing ways. Systems like medical school where abuse is the norm – why? Why value resilience and abuse. Why not value stopping abuse. The biggest problem on this planet is ego, and this comes from emotional mis-attunement and people not being able to sit in their own being. But rather getting their self-esteem and self-worth from other's opinions of them. "Society is collapsing, and people are starting to recognize that the reason they feel like they are mentally ill is that they're living in a system that's not designed to suit the human spirit." -Russell Brand

Self-doubt is exacerbated by inconsistency. When a close other sometimes can tune in and meet your emotional needs, and other times not. Then you really learn to blame yourself in the times it is not happening because you know they can do it. But we need to understand human beings here. Just because someone can attune at random moments 20% of the time, this is often not enough for a child. Especially when there is not consistency or predictability as to when this might happen.

There is a balance here. Growth and learning require people to push through their barriers, and be able to act and produce through discomfort. Coddling is not helping anyone. So there is a balance to strike. Some mothers I've talked to say this new generation of kids got coddled too much and now they can't push through difficulty. So that is not the answer. The answer is holding a high bar, seeing the potential of a person, helping them to push past their max at times. But also making sure they are working to a place where they can act from wholeness rather than self-abandonment.

Or when they cared so much and tried too hard. Or when they met so many other financial, logistical or physical health needs. Or when they were attuned half the time, and the other half they were drunk or pre-occupied and you never could trust what you were going to get. These really make you question your experience. Or you have a sibling or co-worker who is not that bothered by the person. The way they relate to you, and your needs and personality might just make it a bit harder.

The next hallmark feature of chronic mis-attunement is emotional aloneness. When close others dismiss you, shame you or blame you right when you need their co-regulation the most, it is incredibly isolating. It is so painful. Maria remembers taking a bus by herself in Berkeley, CA as a 6-year-old. Terrified, she just put on a brave front to get herself to classes and practices. When she was a teenager her Mom said "I don't do airport drop offs or pick-ups, fend for yourself." Vibha's child is transgender and her extended family distances themselves from her,

subtly implying that it is her fault. The disconnection and isolation cannot be discounted. It is rough.

Chronic mis-attunement leads to depression, substance abuse, personality issues, workaholism, body image obsession, complex PTSD, borderline personality disorder, numbing with food, dissociative disorders, and psychosomatic issues like GI distress, headaches, chronic pain, etc... It is no joke. People like Charmaine that even though she didn't have any physical or sexual abuse, her symptoms in adulthood resemble that of complex trauma. Since both parents, her sister did not attune to her, and they didn't really have family friends. And then she married someone on the spectrum and they both were extremely preoccupied with medical school and having 3 of their own kids, there was never space to really get attuned to. She did with her dog, grandmother, and a friends' mother here and there.

Wei recalls being in the hospital, when somebody died on her watch a mother on the OB/GYN unit. Instead of helping to co-regulate her when she was spinning out over a horrible outcome, her unit supervisor went on a witch hunt to blame her for what she did wrong. She already felt crushed because someone died while she was responsible for their care. This was a normal pattern for mistakes in residency. Having to hold not only the trauma from the days on one's own, but the blame and ridicule on top of it.

Parents minimized negative emotions like anger or crying and reinforced things like being the good child or playing alone in our room or playing quietly and not having needs. We could not get our emotional needs met. Emotionally unsafe families. Did not ask, how was your day? How are you doing? If a child cried, they were sent to their room. You were asked to deal with your feelings alone. Without connection. And to go away from you when they are feeling the most dysregulated. I think it's good for kids to self-regulate. So what happens is we learn to deactivate and not have needs. They don't bring themselves in relationships. They don't feel entitled to their needs and wants. Repetitive rejection of a child's attachment needs. We learned that expressing emotional needs did not go well for us. Or mocked or teased or minimized.

Chronic mis-attunement affect the recipient is that it can distort one's sense of self. Take for example, a toddler whose parent chuckles in response to him crying when a friend takes his toy and subsequently tells him: "You're fine, stop crying." Instead of receiving support from his parent in managing his feelings of anger and sadness about his toy being taken, this child is left alone to cope with his feelings alone. Furthermore, he is told he should not be feeling angry or sad in the first place, nor should he be expressing those emotions through crying. This child is now left to figure out how to suppress his tears, a natural and innately wired biological response. As these interactions pile up, this toddler starts to feel confused and ashamed of themselves.

Self-abandonment is rampant as one is encouraged to disconnect from authenticity, thoughts, desires, wants and de-activate needs. One's self-identity gets skewed to unworthy, un-loveable, low self-confidence.

Alison thinks she has no good reason to be struggling emotionally. She runs a 200 person company, is Mom of the cutest little girls, and in a great marriage. Yet she remembers having to fend for herself a lot as a kid, getting herself to school and sports practices. Taking a bus across a couple of states to start college on her own. "Don't cry, you are being selfish," was a familiar refrain throughout her childhood. Repeatedly told that she was selfish for having emotions. From the outside her family looked like a model family to others, she and her siblings always got complimented on how well they behaved. How quiet they were. But the silencing felt awful in her

body. And she felt totally emotionally alone. Her Dad would come in the bathroom when she hit puberty, watching her body in the bath making comments on how it's changing. When she wrote a letter to her parents to ask for it to stop, they said it was her fault. Her experience and voice did not matter. These days, she is always busy. Never sits still. Always achieving, making ski weekends happen, running a perfect household. But way underneath she doesn't feel connected to herself. She is more a machine that is making life happen. You'd never know it from the outside, but she's often feeling anxious, scared of men and disconnected from her true inclinations. Recalling the transgression as an adult, one of the hardest parts of it was feeling so alone. No one she could turn to for safety. No one caring about the impact on her feelings. Relationships get disrupted as well. When chronically misattuned to, people learn to not trust others and don't let themselves be vulnerable. Justin says: "I'm often caught in this bind of yearning for emotional intimacy in a romantic, friend or family relationship, but then each time I lean into vulnerability or openness, I often get misattuned to or slightly dismissed. And I recoil back into myself. Craving connection and leaning in, then getting slightly retraumatized and recoiling. Such a waste of my life force to be repeatedly caught in this dance. And quite painful."

Relationship with others – not able to do emotional intimacy, trust, let love flow, receive love, co-regulate; feeling ambivalent towards their partner, having trouble being vulnerable, or picking partners who are invalidating and dismissive

Feeling a lot of love inside, but don't feel safe to express it. Bottle it up. Don't feel much love. "I don't know how to deal with the love in me that can't get out."

Chen was shocked to come home and see that his roommate had moved out. He didn't know there was a problem. Tony had been harboring resentment that Chen was just too much of a neat freak. He didn't know how to self-advocate in relationships and Tony held his disgruntlement inside mostly. When he did try and say something, Chen didn't really get how much of a problem it was because Tony undermined his own thoughts about cleanliness as he stated them.

Many therapists end up in a role of co-dependency, where they are taking care of their clients and children others as a proxy for taking care of the true connection, intimacy, and co-regulation that they need.

Self-aggrandizement can happen too. Parents can overly inflate your self-esteem thinking they have better kids than others, needing their own ego to be stoked through unrealistic beliefs and standards for their kids. So the child can think they are better than they are. This pushes others away in relationship. And it's confusing because they will vacillate between overly inflated self-esteem, and then low self-worth they can't let anyone know about. Both are wrong.

How some of us cope with mis-attunement: Self-sufficiency

One way people cope with chronic mis-attunement is to just not have needs. To become relentlessly self-sufficient. Making sure to never feel that pain of being shamed for struggling, or the disconnection when you need it the most. One way children cope with this is avoidant attachment. This is relentless self-sufficiency. When the caregiver can't be there in such important ways for the child, the child might emotionally disconnect from the caregiver and do their best to take care of themselves. Two of their main coping mechanisms in life are high achievement and partial self abandonment. This results from not being emotionally attuned to enough by important people in their lives, yet there have been a lot of pressure to achieve from

them. Abandoning their inner emotional life in service of what society rewards and others around them want. Coping with emotional mis-attunement with high achievement and partial self-abandonment. This is the cycle of emotional abuse that just perpetuated through the generations, through society. It seems so normal. Yet what are the costs? Almost all of us suffer from some form of relational trauma which causes us to live our present lives through the lens of our past. This perspective keeps us trapped in a painful history and blocked from a future that is of our choosing; unlock our minds and bodies from memories, beliefs and perceptions that no longer serve us. When emotionally overwhelmed, not telling anyone and trying to be more perfect at something parent/boss/partner will value/approve of. Shaming oneself internally when make mistakes, and to be better.

So you pushed the fear, shame, rage, overwhelm or hurt down and powered through, or cried it out alone. When this happens repeatedly, one learns to shut down their need. Go numb to it. And resign themselves to it not getting met. There is a video on youtube showing that when an infant is not attuned to, he will try over and over to get the Mom's attention, but when too much time goes by with no attunement, the infant stops trying and goes limp. If this happens too many times, the child and then adult get so adept of pushing their need for connection down, they don't even know moments they really need co-regulation, nor the belief someone will meet it, nor the skill to ask for it and make it happen. "No one is going to help you with these feelings, so you better learn to turn them off on your own." Self-abandonment becomes a go to way of life.

One way to cope with this predicament is to not have needs. To take care of them all yourself. To be so self-sufficient you never need anyone anymore. We become masters of dismissing our feelings and just pushed through. Even build self-esteem on this. "Others are weak, I can outlast any of them." Many that take this route were pressured into over-achievement. Winning could get them some moments of the connection they so craved. Pushing their emotional needs to the side, squashing them down, and pushing through to meet the mis-attuners goals.

Jessica is separating after 27 years of marriage. Her best friend from childhood's Mom (Jane) went to lunch with her Mom (Kim). As the two mother's were talking, Kim was trying to understand the separation. She didn't get it. Her daughter's marriage seemed perfect. Jane said to Kim, "Well Jessica has needs that weren't being met by her husband." Kim quickly retorted back: "But Jessica doesn't have needs!" Jane just shook her head: "Of course your daughter has physical and emotional needs." Kim is the type of mother that used to brag about not breast-feeding her kids. Jessica learned at a very young age to not have emotional needs in front of her mother. It was not safe. Relentless self-sufficiency.

"I dream of never being called resilient again in my life. I'm exhausted by strength. I want support. I want softness. I want ease. I want to be amongst kin. Not patted on the back for how well I take the hit. Or how many."

-Zandashé L'orelia Brown

Often our emotional attunement skills are much higher than those inflicting the emotional abuse, yet we don't always trust that. Linda in her work on Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents, cites countless examples. I think this is what makes it harder for these kids when they are young. They have empathy and attunement skills, so they assume their parents do especially when they feel their parents love. They don't realize their parents skills set at self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and attunement are actually much lower than theirs. And if the parent thinks theirs is enough or higher, it really leads to the child questioning their thoughts, feelings, intuition and reality. When Neha, had kids, the thought she had over and over again was: "This is not that hard. It's so easy to connect in with my son's 'big feelings.' So easy to see

when he is dysregulated and give him a hug. How was this so outside of my parents skill set? It is just seems like basic being a human.” But it is. This is why it get so confusing for adult children of emotionally immature parents to coin a phrase by Dr. Lindsay Gibson. When we are younger, we think that others are perceiving reality like we are. That they have our emotional and relational competencies, especially when they are our caregivers or have power over us. Or especially when they think they are being a great parent. But many adults are less emotionally attuned than their children. A child doesn’t figure this out completely. They might intellectually write their parents off and say: “Oh gosh, Mom again! Sheesh.” But an emotional part of them can still believe that the Mom is right. And really doubt their own reality and their own experience. Internally shame themselves. One client of mine said my two options are to view my Mom as OK or the other option is that she’s a horrible person for doing things like letting me take the bus through Berkeley while I was freaked out at age 6. Or keep us living in a haunted house. Or saying” “I don’t do airport drop offs or pick ups” But we reframed it, as your Mom is just not as skilled as you are at a Mom. You see that your kid is scared taking the bus on their own in SF and you ride with them a few times and get them a friend to go with. Your Mom is missing some of this emotional attunement skill set. You have it for your kids and she didn’t.

What is so tricky – wires can get crossed. Just as when there is sexual abuse, wires get crossed and sexual arousal can feel like fear or hurt and has get relearned. For some with chronic emotional mis-attunement – having their normal emotions can feel wrong or bad. Or feeling care from other hurts. Just like touch from other to a rape victim can be triggering. It’s tricky territory. A physician client who is so good at giving care to her patients and children said to me: “I don’t have a memory of true care coming in my direction in childhood. It don’t have a template to feel your care for me.”

*This is emotional abuse. How can emotions get abused? They are not even real things? So if an emotion is the signal that something is meaningful to their wellbeing. A negative emotion means that something is against their goals or wellbeing. So if another disregards what is important or meaningful to them, or how they thrive, or how they are hurt. These are the signals of what is meaningful to this being, or how this person thrives or how they are hurt and don’t thrive. When another disregards this in them – they are not supporting that person’s thriving, where they get their energy from, how they prosper. To not connect with what is meaningful to them, their warmth, love, energy, creativity. Or to not lean in when their energy is cut off – and not judge – but ask – oh wow – what do you need so your light can shine again?

Also, just because someone is great at attuning in one way, doesn’t mean they are in other contexts and at other times. All we can aspire to it getting more self-aware of when and how to attune well. And more aware of when misses are happening to us and how to speak up with our need or self-soothe. You just have to keep going on your own authority. They can be attuned to something they can relate to like not getting a job after a job interview and attuning to your disappointment there. But they cannot relate to having the colleague you got a lot of your emotional connection from moving to another state. People also sometimes are more attuned in certain days, weeks, months or years of their life due to their own overwhelm and stress. So it can be confusing that they are with you on some things and not on others. Some parents might be really good at the simple emotional needs of elementary kids, and much less able to navigate the emotional territory of teens.

Healing from Chronic Emotional Mis-attunement

The great news is that adults can heal from this attachment trauma. Co-regulating in the midst of emotional overwhelm, and listening to one's inner wisdom that inherently knows how to heal itself are two things that can help. The process of ATTUNE combines the best components of these therapies to help one heal from chronic emotional mis-attunement.

- A Acknowledge that you were emotionally mis-attuned to (psychoeducation)
- T Tune into your higher self (connect to your non-egoic core self/awareness)
- T Tend to your emotional needs (self-soothing/emotion regulation strategies)
- U Undo emotional aloneness (co-regulation & corrective attunement with another)
- N Narrate your life from an updated perspective (shift from a story of self-blame to one of emotional needs poorly met by unskilled others; own your unique value)
- E Empower yourself to take up emotional and relational space (foster constructive dependency; learn to detect your needs in real time, speak in a way that you expect your emotional and relationship needs to be met, say what you think; express love)

Explain and give one example of each of these...

A – Acknowledge: Step 1 is to acknowledge that you were emotionally mis-attuned to and didn't get some of your emotional needs met. This is so hard for so many to say to themselves, because they don't want to see their family members in a bad light. Many of my clients feel they are dishonoring a family member to speak of things that were tough about that person. But you don't have to see them as bad. You just see them as having lower skill in self-awareness, self-regulation and empathy based on their upbringing and background. They almost always had it worse than you, so it's understandable why their skill would be lower. This is not about blaming. It is to objectively discern emotional intelligence skills. To see when another is less able to manage their own mental health or triggered reactions. You can have compassion for their upbringing, or trauma or life path. Yet you never deserved to be chronically mis-attuned to. You needed co-regulation and attunement. If a caregiver or partner are under-resourced themselves, it does not excuse the emotional abuse or neglect you endured, but makes it more understandable.

Self-doubt is a number one factor of chronic emotional mis-attunement. All day long people say they shouldn't complain, or it's their fault they are struggling. But this invalidation perpetuates shame when struggling which impedes progress on wellbeing, physical health, relational intimacy or life functioning. It keeps struggles in secrecy – so you suffer alone and don't get certain help you need. Validating one's experience can be so empowering and freeing. Often once people face and accept where they are at, then they can change.

Those who have been chronically mis-attuned to, are often disconnected from their emotional needs. They don't even know what some of them are. They are so used to over-riding them. And even if they do know what some are, they think it's weak or self-ish to prioritize them. So this section is identifying and attending to one's own emotional needs. Emotional needs can include things like needing psychic space to know your own thoughts, needing to be in a physical space where you won't be intruded upon, needing connection.

So in this step is to write a paragraph about some of your emotional needs that have not been fully met. Below is a list of human needs, wants, desires, values to draw from.

Within Oneself

Self-expression: creativity, play, clothes, looks, growth, authenticity, humor

Physical: exercise, sleep, nutrition, touch, strength, appearance

Down-time: sensory unplug, alone, pacing self, digital detox

Cognitive: mental clarity, focus, intellectual stimulation

Emotional: emotion balance, engagement, recover from triggers, inspiration, joy, lightness, peace, vitality

Spirituality: connection to something beyond yourself, nature

Tradition: adhering to systems, traditions or groups

Integrity: integrated and whole, living one's morals

To be seen: to be known, empathized with, nurtured, valued, appreciated

Environment

Physical safety: home, work, and outdoors

Physical space: aesthetics at home and work, beauty, elegance, noise levels, orderliness

Autonomy: choice, freedom, independence, space, free spirit

Adventure: feel a zest for life, risk taking, seeing new places, spontaneity

Work and purpose

Sense of purpose: meaning, to matter, contribution, productivity

Self-efficacy: competence, empowerment, growth, excellence, personal power

Professional skills: skills, talents, engage to a level of flow, living to your potential

Achievement: accomplishment, success, reaching goals

Recognition: acknowledgement from others for performance and accomplishments

Community Service: helping a cause, serving a person, group or agency

Citizenship: engaging in the social and political community

Financial: meeting you and your family's needs, financial goals

Relationships:

Belonging: inclusion, community, companionship, connection

Communication: able to set boundaries, expressing love, state needs without blame, directness, honesty

Friendship: humor, comradeship, trust, enjoying time with, supporting

Parenting: nurturing, developing, providing for, caring for, mentoring

Romantic partner: romance, intimacy, eroticism, partnership, companionship, connection, trust

Family/relatives: connectedness, fulfilling roles, harmony, participating

Community: participation, comradeship, serving, connection

T Tune into higher self (connect to your non-egoic core self/awareness)

Most of us think we are our thoughts, experiences and memories. But what is interesting, is thoughts and experiences change all the time. Yet the part of us that notices thoughts does not change. There is some kind of back drop awareness that is consistent that is registering all of our life experiences.

When you unhook from thought and reside more in this moment through beingness, awareness and openness you are in your wisdom. Less psychological suffering. Less identification with your egoic self. More heart. There is a non-cognitive intelligence in each of us that we can access more and operate from.

For most people, when they can stop, pause and bring their attention out of their swirling thoughts, to do lists, memories, and emotional reactions, and come back what they can sense through hearing and seeing in the current moment. Come back into their beingness, awareness, hearts and humanity, they have more clarity and wisdom. They are in their own self-leadership. Relating to the current moment through thinking, isn't always the best way. Often that perspective is too small. There is a lot more innate wisdom to access and operate from here.

The more we can learn to shift out of our conditioned thought and emotion patterns, and into what is aware of them, we have more choice. There is a deeper intuition and non-cognitive intelligence here that is helpful to bring online and operate from.

There is an essence within people that already has the qualities of a good internal attachment figure; good inner parent; there is an essence that can't be damaged. Parts just need to open space for it. All healing is rooted in awareness. Shifting off of auto-pilot and onto awareness.

There is an awareness and higher self here in addition to our thinking mind. We don't have to fully rely on problem solving our way through things in life. This self-essence is naturally self-healing if we can reside there. It is good to use as a resource. This is sometimes the hardest thing for people to grok. So I don't want to discourage people by mentioning it second. But I do think it's at the crux of mental health. If one can reliably access their self-essence, the part of them that can notice emotions or notice thoughts or notice memories, then they have the power to choose to respond to life rather than react. It's also the space of self healing. Perspective.

Listening to meditations and developing one's capacity to reside in their meta-awareness can really help. So that you can at will shift to be the observer of your triggered emotional reactions and ruminative thoughts, and not just completely taken by them. But you have space to work with your inner landscape rather than being totally subsumed by it.

T Tend to your emotional needs (self-soothing/emotion regulation strategies)

Then from your higher self, you can more effectively soothe yourself and regulate your internal distress. Many therapies have many tools for self-regulation and self soothing. Cognitive behavior therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, dialectical behavioral therapy, mindfulness, self-compassion to name a few. Many different things can be applied here. So I'll just highlight a few.

If overwhelmed or dysregulated, give yourself permission to reset. Four steps to resetting are:
1) stop and wrap yourself in a soft blanket. Lie on the couch as long as you need to.

- 2) stop trying to add value. Give yourself permission to vege out.
- 3) Say soothing sentences to your inner children. We all have inner parts that are distressed at times. What do you most need to hear right now?
- 4) once regulated do something small that is creative; notice when curiosity comes back online as that is when you are reset. The bliss of being human is when that curiosity comes back online.

Other things that can be helpful when relating to your inner life are to delineate the thought/emotion patterns you get trapped in.

1. Draw out thought/emotion cycle get you stuck in; map your parts
2. TEND
3. Accept the lower EI of the other

The attachment trauma cycle Danielle gets stuck in. As a psychologist when she asked her Dad if he could stay a day later for her wedding, and he said he couldn't because he had to get back to his dog. The cycle that comes up for her at it's worst is: He doesn't love me. I have to prove to him he loves me.

Draw out your cycle – give an example

Tend to Emotions: Trigger -> Thoughts -> Emotions -> Behavior; Exercise for one miniscule example emotional mis-attunement situation

T = Take a Moment to Notice

E = Exit Unproductive Thinking

N = Nurture with Self-compassion

D = Do a small action in line with long-term values

Face/Accept the reality of other's skill-set today. A big way I see people get angry at and feel victimized by a close emotionally immature other, it to have some hope or belief that the other can do better. That they will change. What is better to do is truly face reality. See what their behavior has been the last few years and expect that that is the level they will be functioning at this next year. It is to not waste your precious life force wishing and hoping reality was different from what it is. Radical acceptance of right now.

U Undo emotional aloneness (co-regulation & corrective attunement with another)

It can be helpful if your higher self and a close other can truly witness the emotional overwhelm and aloneness you've been through. The helplessness, the shame, the despair you have deeply known. Therapy is the main place this can happen in a safe way. The transformational energy that you did not experience before is you being in your emotional vulnerability with something you previously were overwhelmed and alone with. When you can fully be in that emotional vulnerability and express it and be co-regulated with by another, it can be healing. And when your higher self, what they call self-energy and self-leadership in Internal Family Systems Therapy can witness how hard it was for you.

Then you want to be with that younger hurt self in you in the way they needed.

N Narrate your life from an updated perspective (shift from a story of self-blame to one of emotional needs poorly met by unskilled others; own your unique value)

Seeing the other person's plight in life and lack of ability. See how the other person does not have your emotional attunement, self-awareness ability. They do not think like you. See how they were unable to be there for you, because they do not currently have that skill set. In moments they might, but when they are in their own stress, personality patterns, they are not able to empathize with you how you can empathize with them. It is not your fault.

Create a new narrative: My emotional struggles make sense. I am not to blame. My co-regulation needs were/are not met enough as my parent or close other was/is less skilled at attunement. It can help with healing to have a coherent narrative of where you have been why you are like the way you are, why you feel what you feel, and see the path of healing as you go forward.

"I was emotionally neglected. My caregivers, close others, bosses, partner etc...) did not have the skill to emotionally attune to me. Most weren't trying to actively mis-attune to me, they were caught in their own stress reaction, trauma, lack of ability to be with their own emotions, so they could not tolerate seeing or being with mine. I was loved in these other ways by them. It is Ok that I've been stuck, depressed, had interpersonal issues, turned to food/substances or restriction. There is an explanation. It is not defected, un-loveable, bad, less than, unworthy or lazy. I am wise, attuned, capable and can choose to not self-abandon and connect with attuned people going forward."

E Empower yourself to take up emotional and relational space (foster constructive dependency; say what you think; express love)

Inside of YOU:

- Tune into anger
- Your unformed thoughts and inclinations have wisdom in them. They are a valid way of being and point of view. The more you don't conform to other's perspectives and you really tune into your own unique way, they more you will feel better for yourself, but also speak for the silenced in society that are sick with depression.
- Society is sick with a disease of chronic emotional mis-attunement to oneself and each other. The more people can really tune into and be with their own selves, and do it with each other, the healthier relationships and individuals will be. So it's important to not just push through mis-attunement – but to call out its corrosive effects on me, my biological system, my wellbeing and functioning. The fall out for me. The downstream effects. Both the self-misattunement and mis-attunement by others.

With others:

- Express own thoughts and feelings—don't expect them to be heard or received
- Set boundaries
- Ask for help, do vulnerability with safe others
- Speak in a way that you expect that others are going to want to and be able to meet your emotional needs

Feel anger – anger training

- *Tune into your Anger:* Notice when you feel small signs of anger or tamped-down forms of anger, like frustration, irritation, or stubbornness. “I dislike, I hate...” Looking down on another. yourself to feel bothered, upset or angry about situations you don’t like. Welcome anger as a way to connect with what is important to you. To connect with your power, wisdom and energy. Don’t disconnect from emotions that might create tensions with others. Turn up the volume of your anger.
- *See your Anger as Good:* Reframe anger as an empowered response. When it’s channeled consciously, it can help you establish boundaries, assert your needs, deepen relationships, let people know you, clue you into what’s most important to you, and gives you more access to your power. Learn to tell the difference between lack of conflict and emotional distance versus positive confrontation leading to deeper connection and relating and true harmony. If you can tolerate the fear of your own power and energy, the fear that you might hurt someone if you express how you actually are, you can redirect the energy to make a real difference in the world. Connecting with your anger is central to you feeling energized, being who you really are and expressing your wisdom in this world. Be the leader the world needs.
- *Passive Aggression is not the Answer:* Realize that when you don’t consciously feel and express your anger, it doesn’t go away; it leaks out in passive aggression. Learn to recognize when you are leaking. Become more aware of how and when you express aggression passively. Make lists of things you can do to be more active and direct in these situations, even if you are not ready to take these actions.
- *Understand your Resistance to Anger:* Explore all the reasons why you don’t want to feel or express anger—both generally and because of experiences in your past. Talk these through with someone.
- *Enlist Help from Others:* Ask the people in your life to help you learn to express anger. Tell them about any fears you may have connected with being angry. Take a risk and start expressing your anger in small ways, being careful at the beginning. Learn how to express your frustration or disagreement as soon as it happens so it doesn’t build up.
- *Practice Daily:* Practice leaning into conflict to express disagreement and make yourself more known, more important, and more included as who you really are. Being decisive, confronting issues head on and acknowledging disagreements can lead to stronger connections. Ask yourself what you want more often and express opinions and preferences. You have succeeded when you know when you have been transgressed, and when you can express dissatisfaction directly. Success does not depend on another’s reaction to your expression. Just that you are in tune with your own underlying reaction, and that you tried to address it.

Recognize triggers

- Diary out your process; chain analysis for the top 5 ways you get triggered. Draw out a problematic event, assemble it, understand it.
- Map your campfire
- Draw out your cycle; dissociate, numb with food
- What valued action steps can you do instead?

Foster emotionally attuned relationships; build emotional assertiveness skills that don’t have:

- Find a connection that provides strength. Humans rely on connection for support and belonging. While one heals from attachment trauma, they don't have to work on their romantic relationships right away. They can start with a friendship, or a relationship with a therapist. Which relationship gives you strength and security? Then, you can look at what traits make that happen, so you can better understand how a healthy relationship can function. Think about relationships that give you resiliency. What are the qualities of those relationships? Usually, it has to do with being seen, feeling truly seen, feeling heard, and a person that is helpful in regulating your own nervous system.
- Assume that certain people will be receptive to emotional needs and ask for them
- Create relationships in real life where you are emotionally seen, known, cared for and accepted. Create relationships with secure attachment. Can your person be there if you push to the end of your capability, and trust that someone else can pick up the pieces and hold you if you go over your bounds. This is where inner resourcing doesn't do it all.
- What are interpersonally assertive or vulnerable things to put into practice – saying No, asking for what you actually need; letting someone in on your inner experience; it's a daily practice of choice point – choosing above the line thoughts and behaviors
- encourage healthy relationships and healthy dependency on others; ask for help; relationships that are reciprocal; earn vulnerability with other – back and forth.
Connection and reciprocity
- assume that others would be delighted to connect with you at a deeper level or in your way
- stop care-taking, manipulating, putting your needs to the side, manipulating the other; come back over to yourself and speak your truth and what you need
- Let's stop associate strength with someone's ability to smile through tears and suffer in silence. To strength being brave enough to talk about what's hurting you on the inside.
- Don't idealize being accommodating. I used to take pride in this, and this is how I feel good. When this kind of people pleasing martyrdom

Navigating emotionally mis-attuned relationships in daily life: With relatives, parents, being single/online dating, boss, colleagues, partner...

- take space, resetting, knowing how and why you are triggered
- speaking your needs
- If there, connect with positive essence in person, feel their underlying love
- Parents of adult kids feel more love for the kids than the kids feel back; so be careful about fully cutting them out
- Understanding other: they can be loving sometimes and super helpful; and other times their own reactivity or their world view is less attuned and compassionate. You also need to take personal responsibility and push through in life. There is a balance.
- Take responsibility when your mind is interpreting things too negatively. Have compassion that you've been traumatized in this space, so you might be mis-interpreting things. Something I see with people with attachment trauma is that they do get interpersonally triggered, when maybe the slight was not there. So it's a delicate space.
- Phrases you can say to others:
 - Your experience is valid. It may be very true and very hard for you. Just because you have a need or experience right now, doesn't mean I have the emotional bandwidth to field it right now. Ask me if this is a good time for me to talk about your experience or need.

- I would rather adjust my life to your absence, than adjust my boundaries to accommodate your disrespect.

Focus on taking small and large action steps on what you value, brings you alive, makes you thrive

- Way of integrity; authenticity

Are you able to have boundaries, what are they

How feel in your body when you set a boundary

How does taking space feel

How can I share love while still protecting myself; how do I not betray myself (how does it look, how feel in my body) and still give love

In sum, the emotional aloneness you've felt in life is too much. You were chronically mis-attuned to. You've had emotional neglect. This is how human lives go on this planet. Hurt people are having kids and raising hurt people. The key is not blame anyone, and not blame yourself. It's to discern the state of affairs clearly. And to break the cycle as you go forward. You want to catch all the subtle ways you are emotionally neglectful within your own psyche to yourself, and undo those more and more. You want to accept reality and the skill level of others. You want to know when you have a need and build safe relationships to express those needs in to get them met and co-regulate. And you want to heal your little 't' trauma from your higher self. As you go forward you want to operate like the world can meet your needs more to a certain extent. Your emotional experiences are valid. You are a miracle of life. You have special gifts and talents that no one else has. You touch people in ways that others don't. The world needs your expression, your voice, your gifts and talents. Revere and love your unique way of being. There will never be another you.