



How Attachment Theory Can Improve Your Relationships

Dr. Keith Witt and Corey deVos

[00:00:00] **Corey:** Dr. Keith, good to see you as always!

[00:00:02] **Keith:** Corey,. Good to see you as always.

[00:00:06] **Corey:** This is gonna be a great, fantastic and fascinating episode where we're gonna be taking a close look at attachment theory, which is basically this idea that how we manage and navigate our relationships is in many, many ways, sort of fundamentally defined, informed by, our earliest relationships that we formed with our parents, and how those dynamics... they almost fractalize out, right? Like, we have a particular dynamic with our mothers, with our fathers, that we internalize and it almost becomes our wiring, our neurological wiring that then informs how we show up in relationship for decades to come.

So it's a really, really important and interesting subject about the Integral Mind. And I can't wait to hear what you've got to say today.

[00:00:58] **Keith:** I really like what you just said about "fractalize out". That's exactly what happens, cuz we're complex systems, inside ourselves and with other people. And, you know, in complex systems there's these interfaces between the differentiated parts, where forms take place and that's how those systems evolve. And with human beings, it comes from also our intentionality and our history and so on. And that's how "include and transcend" actually works from a mathematical standpoint, because that next step is including in transcending

the previous step.

So let's talk about attachment theory. First of all, it's not like Buddhist attachment, so really different, different concepts. So let's kind of put Buddhist attachment aside. I like what Daniel P. Brown, speaking of Daniel P. Brown, said it: he doesn't like the word attachment, he likes "grab".

Okay, so he think Buddhist is grab, attachment is more, you know, connecting. And first of all, up to the fifties, the psychological theory that had dominated the world was Freudian theory. Learning theory was trying to heroically to make an alternative, and were as usual, was failing miserably until finally they included cognition. They didn't wanna include cognition for 10 years, and they realized nothing's gonna happen without that. And then, you know, they kind of got on board. And now cognitive behavioral therapy is the scaffolding. Mm-hmm. , but up into the fifties it was psychoanalytic theory, which says "problems when you're a little kid, create problems when you're an adult".

Now, unfortunately, there were no scientific studies done on that until 1965, which shows that there weren't very many psychoanalytic scientist types you know, for 40 years. But this psychoanalyst, Bowlby, John Bowlby, an English guy, upper class English guy, after World War II noticed in some adolescents that there were characteristic relational patterns that they had. And he looked a little bit deeper and he went, "whoa, I'm noticing different forms, predictable forms."

And he went and looked a little deeper and he went, "Hmm, you can actually see the genesis of these forms in infants." And he began to develop what he thought was a scientific study of human relationships. And that was very important to him, to have it be scientific, because I assume that the critique of psychoanalysis, that it wasn't scientific, got to him.

And he went, "wait a minute, let's look at this." And then there was a woman named Mary Ainsworth who said, "well, there must be a way to determine whether children, infants, are securely attached or not", and she actually found out how to do that, created a test called the Ainsworth after her, she called it the Strange Situation Test. And then later on at Berkeley, Mary Main and Eric Hesse, developed another test called the Adult Attachment Inventory, where you could test security of attachment in grownups.

So what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna talk about what secure and insecure attachment is first, then I'm gonna talk about a little bit of where it came from, what the significance of this was as it began to hit the world, and how there was a natural blending of neurobiology and interpersonal neurobiology and attachment. And what that did is it expanded the field and it began to... other people that had other systems began to see how their systems were affected by the concept of secure and insecure attachment, particularly as we all began to apply it to our relationships with the different parts of ourselves. Okay? And of

course when anybody does this, there's blind spots initially, partly because most of the people that were doing this were green. And so hierarchical elements of this kind of got obscured and unconsciously avoided by the field. And I'm gonna talk a little bit about that. And then, how the whole attachment capacity gets spread out in mass formation, both in positive and a negative sense, because there's a certain kind of attachment thing that goes on.

But first of all, let me explain what attachment is. People noticed that there were some children, about 55% of 'em that were what was called "securely attached". "Securely attached" meant that they expected the parent to be around, and when the parent was around, they expected to be known by the parent. And if there was a problem, they expected the parent to notice and help 'em with it. They would go off and explore stuff, and then when they felt distress, they'd go back and get and come to the parent, they'd be quickly reassured, go someplace else. A securely attached 14 month old kid, for instance, will get distressed if a parent says no, but if a parent picks 'em up and reassures 'em, they're back to being a happy 14 month old kid in about 10 seconds.

So that was securely attached kids. Most of them grew up to be adults that had more capacity for secure attachment in their relationships, and they had what was called "secure autonomous autobiographical narratives". Their lives made sense to them in the past, present, and future, and they felt hopeful about how they were navigating in the future. And they tended to have relationships where they could be better connected, more secure relationships with other adults and with their own children.

But then there were about 20% of the kids, 15 to 20% of the kids, that were avoidant. They would avoid the caregiver. They didn't really get that upset when caregiver is around or not around. They still had the same levels of arousal that other kids would, but they suppressed it. And they would grow up to be more emotionally dismissing type people, vaguely hostile, adolescent avoidants are more likely to engage in sexual assault than other types, as one example of that. And then when they had kids, they were more likely to have kids, they'd be dismissive about emotions than they were more likely to have kids that were avoided.

Then there's another 15% or so, 15 - 20%, that were anxious, ambivalent, or angry/resistant. And these are kids who are not easily soothed. They were whiny and clingy, they were demanding, they were irritating. And they grew up to be parents who were kind of preoccupied with their own distress periodically. And then when they had kids, that preoccupation with kids, was associated with those kids being angry/resistant or anxious/ambivalent.

And then there's about five to 10% of the kids that didn't have a strategy with stress. They didn't like, avoid, weren't avoidant, or they weren't clingy and not easily soothed, they were disorganized and disoriented. That was often

associated with parents who were abusive, or neglectful. And, when they grew up, they had a lot of problems.

So this was developing in the fifties and sixties. Interestingly, it didn't catch on in the United States. I studied psychology in the seventies, late sixties and seventies, and I was not taught attachment science. It was in existence at that time, but it wasn't seen as any kind of a big deal. You know, Freud's first paper happened in, I don't know, 1890, but it was, you know, 10 or 15 years later that people began to think about psychoanalysis.

But then we had the decade of the brain, the nineties, the functional MRI and the other imaging techniques. And people began to start looking at brains. And they saw that people's emotional state and the way they dealt with other people, it was reflected in brain morphology, you know, in the shape of the brain and in how the brain functioned.

An interpersonal neurobiology that was a field that was to a certain extent created by Alan Shore, and other people, Dan Siegel, have followed and contributed. Interpersonal neurobiology said, well, we are beginning to accept that we're ultra social and that everything is relationships, and that these relationships go in a predictable fashion, and we can see brain correlates for it. And not only that, one thing that we're noticing is that it's really good for brains to have a good, safe relationship.

Now the psycho analyst and there's still a bunch of 'em, were really happy about this because everybody's been trashing psychoanalysis since, I don't know, 1950. Still exists though!

And the basic premise of psychoanalysis is that you create an intimate relationship with the client, and that's a healing thing. Well, one of the findings of attachment theory is that for a lot of people that were insecurely attached as kids, they could become securely attached as adults. It was called "earned secure attachment". And they found that the mediating force for that as they had at least one relationship that was an intimate relationship with somebody else, that was great, and that that helped initiate them into the capacity for secure attachment.

And you can have secure attachment with one person, an insecure attachment with another person. Kids do better with three or more secure attachment figures. Why? We were raised in tribes. In a tribe, in an hour 10 people hold a baby, and in the day the whole tribe touch the baby, so the baby's always feeling contained by the tribe. One or two parents, not so much. Okay? So modern parenting is very, very difficult on parents and on kids. And that's a thing we've talked about a lot.

And so, the neurobiologists and psychoanalysis got together and went, "okay, so what do we do about this?" And then people began to develop systems for

supporting secure attachment in kids. Susan Johnson has her emotionally focused therapy, based on attachment, mentalization based therapy for borderlines in the United Kingdom is based on it. Now people were just entranced, and what everybody does when you get intoxicated with something, is you over-interpret it. Of the people who are listening, who have observed our shows over the years, they'll notice that we go from one thing that I'm wildly enthusiastic about, to another thing that I'm wildly enthusiastic about, to another thing that I'm wildly... okay. So, throughout my clinical life... and after this happened the first, I dunno, five or 10 times, I realized, "Keith, don't over-interpret this new thing that you're wildly enthusiastic about, fit it into everything else." And then when I learned integral, then that accelerated that tendency and capacity in me on steroids, of course. And, you know, that led to all my books, and to this, to this conversation.

So I think it's useful to understand what secure attachment looks like in an infant, and how you make it happen, and how they studied it. And there's two tests and in adults too, there's two tests that are famous in this field. One is the one I mentioned earlier, the Strange Situation Tests, the Ainsworth, named after Mary Ainsworth. And the other one is the Adult Attachment Inventory developed by Eric Hesse and Mary Main, his wife, in Berkeley. Different tests, but one tests adult attachment, and one tests infants.

So here's the Strange Situation. Mom and baby go into a room with, you know, one way mirror, cameras and everything, and there's a lot of toys, and they start to play. Play for a while, and then a nice person comes in, and mom says, "I gotta leave", and she leaves. Nice person hangs out with the kid for a little while, mom comes back in, and then kid and mom reunite and start playing again. Now all of this is observed, and information is taken from every little bit of this, but the most significant event in this whole test is the reunion when mom comes back in the room. With these securely attached infants, mom would come back, "oh mom!" You know, a little hug, a little kiss, and then we're back to playing. With the avoidant infants, "oh, mom. So what?" You know? You know, I'm playing with my dinosaur. Okay. With the anxious-ambivalent kids, "oh, mom, mom, mom, oh, you were so..." You know, they're not saying anything cuz these are one year olds, okay? But "wah wah wah", "it's fine". "Wah wah wah" It's like that. Okay? And of course, the securely attached kids tended to have parents that were securely attached themselves, and the ambivalent, anxious-ambivalent kids had preoccupied parents, with their own emotions. And the avoidant kids tend to have emotionally dismissive "suck it up and carry on" parents. Okay? And as I said earlier, this was likely to continue.

And a couple called the Sroufes did a longitudinal study in Minnesota. Longitudinal research is really hard. They don't do much of it anymore, cuz you want quick results. Okay, well you do a 30 year study, not many quick results in a 30 year study. there's a lot of study, there's a lot of data that comes out of it. They're the ones that discovered the secure attachment can be earned, earned,

secure attachments, so on.

And then we went, "Well, what does it look like in adults?" So Mary Main and Eric Hesse developed the Adult Attachment Inventory, which is a series of questions that you ask somebody, and they answer, and it's recorded and transcribed. And people don't hear the tape, no nonverbals. They take that transcription, and by reading that transcription they can tell whether the person is preoccupied, they don't really connect with their past. Anxious/ambivalent, angry/resistant people tend to remember negative stuff. The emotionally dismissive people have trouble remembering stuff often before the year of 10, and they'll say, "Yeah I had a good parent." "Well, what are four adjectives that describe your father?" "Cold, distant, domineering, and an alcoholic." "Yeah, but you had a good relationship with him." "Yeah, I had a good relationship." You know, like that. Okay. It doesn't fit. Okay. To the people that had a coherent, autonomous, autobiographical narrative, they kind of had consistent memories from earliest memory forward.

I mean, memory doesn't really get solid until around 10, but we all have... well, those of us with secure, coherent, autonomous autobiographical narratives have memories. And so we have a sense of our development into the present moment and a hopeful sense of us on the journey of life going forward. And so they found that that worked okay, and that they could make a lot of assumptions about people that turned out to be validated by other measures and by direct observation.

Now this was a really big deal, okay? First of all, the psychoanalysts now have data that shows that the relationship is really good. Interventions started showing up that were fascinating interventions. For instance, there was a whole lot of young, poor borderline mothers with infants who were given a visit once a week from somebody who knew about secure attachment. Five years later, their kids have half as much psychopathology as the kids who didn't have a visit.

[00:16:02] **Corey:** Oh, wow.

[00:16:03] **Keith:** John Godman studied couples and found that 70% of the time, after the birth of the first child, three years later, the couple's doing badly, and the kids having a few problems. But if he taught them about, essentially, secure attachment over a weekend, three years later 70% of the couples were doing better, and the kids were doing better. So one of the things that emerged out of that was, a lot of this is just people don't know what to do, what it is.

And so let's look at what creates a securely attached infant. What creates this... and this is true for our us and our interior selves also, and it's true for us and other people. But let's just start with an infant. A securely attached infant has a parent that is present. You know, no matter how good you are, you have to be around. Okay? They're congruent. So whatever their emotional state or whatever, they think their emotional state is congruent with their non-verbals, okay? With

the infant, they're contingent. Contingent means the baby's sad., You go, "Oh, you're sad." The baby's angry, "Oh, you're angry." The baby wants space, "Oh, you want some space?" They're contingent with the baby. They're attuned. Okay? And they're marked.

And this is what marking is. You notice when I was just doing, "oh, you're sad. Oh, you're angry, oh, you're having fun." You notice how I'm exaggerating the expression on my face? This is called marking. If I'm looking at a three-year-old who's upset, I go, "oh, you have some pain." That kid will see my face, via mirror neurons, will feel my intentionality, and will know because it's marked and because we're attuned, cuz when you're attuned, that's when the mirror neurons light up. The kid feels empathized with.

So what happens is the child feels known and they feel accepted, "I know you and want you and love you", and they feel protected. I am protecting you from external pain, stress, I'm actually protecting you from internal pain and stress. You feel upset. I pick you up, I nurse you, you feel better. Okay? So the parent present, congruent, contingent, and marked, the child known, accepted, and protected, that creates secure attachment.

Fast forward to adults, you marry somebody and you feel like your husband is present, he's congruent, he's contingent with you, and he lets you know in ways that feel authentic, that he gets you. And then you feel known by him, you feel accepted by him, and protected by him. Secure attachment in adults.

Take it a step farther. Most of us have parts of us that we don't like. If you talk to somebody that was chronically, say, sexually abused or physically abused as a child, and you ask them, "well, what's that little kid like?" First of all, everybody will go, "yeah, there's a little kid in me that feels abused." Hardly ever does somebody not get that. We all understand we have a vast number of beings in us. It can be activated when we go into that state and give it a form.

So lot of psychotherapies, the most current popular one is internal family systems, but Gestalt did it, psychosynthesis did it, Jungian therapy does it, basically all the ones that deal with spirituality, magic, you know, energy, all of that. We find the part of us that has been separated and is isolated. In fact, in internal family systems they're called "exiles". And what do we do? We find that place from the position of our most mature self, and ideally, you know, if you do the work, that's a Wise Self. Wise Self goes, when that part of us is activated and you feel, say, depressed for a month, that Wise Self goes and tells that depressed self, "okay, I get it, you're depressed, and you're bummed, and in the past you kind of didn't get the contingency that you wanted when you were depressed, really, or the holding or comfort, so I'm here with you. You don't have to not be depressed, but also I'm not gonna leave. So you're never alone. You might feel alone, and I understand that, but you're not ever alone. I'm always

here with you." When that's established, that part gets integrated.

So all these systems, transactional analysis, there's a whole process that was developed where you did this with scripts. Went back to the original message that, you know, " I'm not worthwhile or I'm worthless." Okay. Let's find that part of you, and then let's connect that with the wise part of you. It's a mechanism that creates secure internal attachment. So now we have a system that creates secure internal attachment, that creates attachment with partners, and also guides us into creating attachment with our kids.

And you notice that, when we're talking about dealing with infants, it requires a certain amount of self-observation to be a securely attached parent. You know, the avoidant people, emotionally dismissive people are not noticing that they're telling their crying five months old, you know, "suck it up". I mean, people do that. " He's gonna have to learn how to take care of himself." He's fucking five months old, pick him up. You know, it's like that, you know, Ferber, that famous Ferber guy, "we're gonna Ferber our kids and let him cry until they go to sleep". Right. Not the best way to teach kids how to sleep.

[00:21:51] **Corey:** Right. That's still a really prevalent parenting tactic.

[00:21:55] **Keith:** I know. You know, the problem with it is, is that part of it is true. The Ferber part that was true, and I'm not gonna go down a rabbit hole with this, I promise, but I'm just gonna say, the part of it was true is that modern parent, child -centered parents can't tolerate their children's pain. So if you wanna put a kid down and teach 'em how to self-sooth, you need, you know, you pat 'em and say, okay, I'm checking in five minutes, and they cry. So you have to tolerate them crying for five minutes, come in and pat 'em and say, "look, you know, I'm gonna come in again five minutes." And you know, and " time for you to learn how to sleep by yourself." And then they cry. So a lot of modern parents, more often than not, break down. "Now you can come sleep with us tonight, you know, we'll just do it tonight, why not?" You know, it's like that . And so what happens is you have 10 year olds sleeping with their parents, 12 year olds. You know, it starts getting a little, it's like, I don't know, I mean I'm sure your kid can be fine if you nurse 'em until five. I don't know. It's, you know, I'm sure your kid can be fine if he sleeps with you until 11, but, you know, I think it's good to teach kids how to sleep by themselves.

I think it's good to wean kids when you can talk to 'em about it. Anyway, that's just my own preference. I think that's better for kids.

[00:23:10] **Corey:** It's a polarity, right? I mean, we want to simultaneously role model resilience and vulnerability with our kids. It's okay to be both of these things.

[00:23:21] **Keith:** That's right. And remember, the thing about attachment is that it's part of a much larger framework, like everything else. For instance, everything that I just said had to deal with parents being secure attachment figures for infants, okay? Infants don't need boundaries, you know, they just need to be loved and cared and cherished. Kid starts to walk about one years old and getting into things, they need boundaries. Parents that are emotionally coaching but can't set boundaries, their kids are more aggressive seven or eight years later. So part of emotionally coaching is there's an emotion, let's talk about it, let's identify it, let's problem solve, and set boundaries. And so that setting boundaries part is why Joe Newman's book, Raising Lions, is so popular, because he's basically reintroducing into green culture, "you gotta set boundaries to give your kid an optimal developmental path."

All right, so we're ultra social, we have this desire to attach. Also, the original studies couldn't find a genetic predisposition for secure attachment, and so they concluded that there wasn't one. That was to me a radical misinterpretation of the data. We're ultra social, we're all wired to have secure attachment. We all want it, we all seek it. Now, where the whole green meme kind of broke this thing down is, you don't like hierarchy. Some kids are born to be more easily securely attached, and some kids are born to be much more difficult in attachment. And that's just the way that it is. In one study, 70% of the kids were easy, hard, or slow to warm up.

Well, depending upon the goodness of fit with a parent, that really matters in terms of the attachment relationship. Also, the twin studies that have been coming out, and we've talked about them, temperamental traits are 40 to 60% heritable, and personality disorders are 80% inheritable. ADD is 95%, 98% inheritable. So kids were born different types. And these different types would have more or less difficulty with parents. For instance, if you're a borderline mother where you're regularly chaotic, if you have a friendly, happy kid, that kid gets more attention, more good attention, than a kid who's kind of more avoidant and more sullen. My brother, my older brother's a year older than me, was more avoidant and sullen. Okay? I mean, the way that they got him off the bottle, this is a true story, they took him out in the backyard and put all his bottles in a bucket, they took a hammer and they broke 'em. Okay.

[00:26:13] **Corey:** Jesus.

[00:26:14] **Keith:** That's why you don't get a bottle anymore, they're all dead, we killed them. Now, interestingly, he took that same claw hammer into my crib and tried to kill me with it, you know, later on. Maybe cuz I... and I wasn't nursing. My mother didn't believe in nursing, but I had a bottle, I guess. You know?

Now was there a connection with them breaking those bottles with the claw hammer, and then him digging out that claw hammer? Well, I'm sure some people would say, "God, that's just a coincidence." I don't think so. I think was

some weird fucked up family dynamics, you know, kind of bubbling up through my family, through that thing.

And so, some people are more prone to this, and remember 15 to 19% of the population have a personality disorder where they can't self-observe, and they can't receive influence. They only have one way of being right. Those people are gonna still crave secure relationships, will seek them out, but when their one way of being, which is being controlling or being paranoid, or being chaotic, or you know, being entitled or whatever, is not working, the relationship will break down.

And so you just don't have secure attachment in those situations. Even with schizoid people who don't know how to attach, they get a lot of distress from the people around them who wanna attach with them and are frustrated because they can't.

And if you look at this whole attachment thing about feeling connected and feeling caring and so on, you can see how it feeds into mass formation. In mass formation, people are alienated, isolated, and so on. And now here's a group that says "you're connected. We have a shared mission, and you are accepted and protected by us, and you're known by us. And we're all together, we're all joined together by this thing. Oh, by the way, to do this, you have to hate somebody else." That's the mass formation psychosis. Or to do this thing, you have to love everybody. That's a healthy mass formation. But it's using the same structures.

And then what are the structures? There's mirror neurons, there's... we're the most sensitive to oxytocin of any species, and we produce the most of it, of any species. We're wired to have these intimate relationships, and then they move in and out of secure, insecure, disorganized, and the other ones.

And so that's how it all fits together. And currently now, if you go to any training program, in psychotherapy or in psychology, they'll teach you attachment theory. They'll teach you about attachment parenting. Attachment parenting is the current gold standard for parenting. They will encourage you to be emotionally coaching, which is what autonomous adults can do with their children, and to not do emotionally dismissing, which is what avoidant or emotionally dismissing parents do. Or to not be disconnected, cuz you need to be present, like absent parents do. Or to not be authoritarian, which is what rigid parents do. So they'll teach about how to be emotionally coaching and create a secure attachment through each stage.

Interestingly, the attachment dynamics play out differently from purple to red to amber and so on. Probably attachment as we understand it, is different in tribes, there's probably some other stuff going on with that, though. They still have the same pair bond stuff that the rest of us have, you know, jealousy and that kind of stuff, romantic infatuation and so on.

And this is, I think, one of the reasons why, you know, Trump is essentially a red bully, right? And so he, a lot of people in his administration, were amber and orange. They were the fundamentalists who were gonna put up with him to get their agendas, and then there was the calculating rationalists who said, "yeah, yeah, we can get our things met." But you notice that after they felt autonomous, after they felt separate, all of them wrote these tell-alls about what an asshole he was. You know, why was that? Because they just felt bullied by him and they wanted to get back. That felt unfair, they wanted to reestablish the power dynamic psychologically for them, and to let people know, "don't identify me with this guy, you know, I was just following orders." Which didn't really help people in Nuremberg, but, you know. You notice how very few, none as far as I can tell, maybe there's somebody, of Obama's administration wrote a book trashing Obama. Why? He was a green/teal leader. And so fairness mattered to him. People were loyal to him because they weren't frightened, they were doing it because they had a shared mission, and that's healthy mass formation that somewhat happened. And so we can see these attachment mechanisms happening on a large scale, and then on a small scale, and then on an intrapsychic scale. Which is a really big deal. To find those places, those exiles in us, and then connect with them from our Wise Self, letting them know that they're known, accepted, and protected, changes us. It helps us grow up.

And there you go. Attachment theory.

[00:31:16] **Corey:** This was a powerful one, Keith. You know, I tell you often that whenever we do these shows, it's like I've got my next month's homework, you know? And this one's no different. I mean, this one actually, for me personally, cuts really, really deeply. You know, I can definitely see all of the ways that... I can see all of the ways that I was prevented or had difficulty finding a sense of secure attachment as a kid. You know, part of which was because my mother had her own traumas when she was a kid, so she was very...

[00:31:55] **Keith:** Preoccupied. She was preoccupied

[00:31:58] **Corey:** And she was young, she had me when she was 18 years old and, you know, and all that. I've told you the story before about how, you know, I'm an only child, but I had a twin who who died in childbirth, or shortly before childbirth. There's a whole huge source of attachment issues right there. I'm also, you know, Generation X, I was born in 1977, which was right before this huge wave, social wave, of increasing divorce rates. Right? My parents got when I was two or three years old. I can feel how that has, you know, affected me. So this one cuts really, really deep, because I see so much of myself, and so much of my... of the difficulty that I've had over the decades to, you know, fulfill my belongingness needs, to transcend a feeling of isolation or a feeling of being broken beyond repair, or of a feeling of being, you know, too weird or strange, to fit in somewhere. You know, I still have some of that. I mean, I've gotten a lot

better over the years, you know, fortunately...

[00:32:59] **Keith:** Earned . Secure, you're an earned secure attachment person, Corey.

[00:33:03] **Corey:** Slowly, we're getting there. We're getting there, Keith. But you know, it's also like, you know, you mentioned earlier, it's like, it's easy to get really excited about an idea and over-interpret too, right? Like whenever we have these shows, I run upstairs and I tell my wife, "I figured it out! This is the reason I am so fucked up!" Right? "And here's my work for the next month, until next month when I find out the next reason why I'm so fucked up." So it's, you know...

[00:33:26] **Keith:** Wow, we've done a lot of shows.

[00:33:29] **Corey:** Exactly!

[00:33:30] **Keith:** We've got like 45 reasons to be fucked up. It's amazing you're still alive, Corey! "Yeah, thank you!"

[00:33:37] **Corey:** No, and it's totally true, and I'm sure that this is true for a lot of people who are watching us right now who have their own versions of this.

[00:33:44] **Keith:** Oh yeah, we all have our own versions of this.

[00:33:46] **Corey:** That's right. And so much of it really is sort of generationally transmitted. You know, it's these cycles. And that for me has been a big reason why I've been grateful, I've been grateful that, well, in sort of a weird way, I'm grateful for all the insecurity that I had as a kid, so that I could sort of intentionally try to get to the other shore, so that now that I have a kid, right, I can see these patterns as object, right?

[00:34:18] **Keith:** Yes.

[00:34:18] **Corey:** And I can therefore operate sort of in real time in order to make the necessary adjustments. Hopefully not overcompensations, though surely there's some of those too, right? But just being able to make the adjustments to make sure that this generational sort of "fucked upness" can hopefully, as much as possible, stop with me.

[00:34:44] **Keith:** I'd say Evie, ten to one, she's securely attached with both of you, and probably somebody else too. That's my prediction about your daughter. So I might be wrong, but I'm probably not.

[00:34:54] **Corey:** I'll get back to you in 10 years.

[00:34:59] **Keith:** Yeah. And by the way, those of us that are securely attached, even when we weren't, on those fractal boundaries, when we develop our defenses, we will develop avoidant defenses, "suck it up and carry on", which I was trained to do as a boy in the fifties. I mean, "suck it up, carry on" was the John Wayne approach, and we were all supposed to do it, and my family was supposed to do it. And my two brothers and I were supposed to do it, and that was all there was to it, but also we have the anxious/ambivalent, not easily soothed... so, you know, you can see how the defenses will lean towards one or the other, or the chaotic, disoriented, disorganized. They're all there, but it is a fluid thing. And you know, you can see how you became a seeker.

[00:35:43] **Corey:** Yeah, a hundred percent. That's right.

[00:35:45] **Keith:** There's a part of you that, when there's... you knew intuitively, this is probably your soul speaking Corey, "there's something more and I'm just gonna keep looking for it." You know, and notice when you find something that's relevant... this is why it's fun to study this stuff and find maybe one of the reasons it's fun to learn new things. If you had this objective sense, "I'm a little bit closer to true north here, a little bit closer to having that sense of coherence of 'my life makes great sense to me, going forward, and I feel more and more like a coherent autonomous being that's managing all the choir, there's nobody down there that's killing me right now or dragging me down or I have to ignore or something like that.'" You can see how it's more and more of that shape that interestingly, now going back into integral, leads us to feeling a sense of attunement to larger and larger, wider and wider embrace, until after a while, we go, "wow, I guess I am the universe." And so are you, and so am I. You know? So are the I-I. And we have a moment of that, and we go, okay, certainly in an embodied state, that's one of the Omega points. I think that there's places beyond that, but that's gonna be a form of Omega point developmentally, if you're a seeker. You know, you're having a stable state of non-dual awareness, and allowing purpose in this incarnation to arise through that into the world. And that's securely attached with the universe at that point.

[00:37:21] **Corey:** Yeah, no, that's beautifully said.

[00:37:23] **Keith:** And we were talking earlier about how Daniel P. Brown, on his website had meditations where people would use figures from Buddhist and Hindu mythology to be the ideal mothers that they never had, the ideal fathers that they never had. And this is why we pick archetypes, you know, and then follow archetypes or even leaders that will help us embody the qualities that we hunger for.

[00:37:47] **Corey:** Fascinating. No, and it's beautiful, and it's interesting, you know, sort of phenomenologically I can see it, where it's almost like you're reaching up for a type of stability and security that you couldn't find down there. But once you can find something where it feels like a solid handhold, you know

what I mean? Like...

[00:38:05] **Keith:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:38:06] **Corey:** I can put my weight on this, and it's not going to break. I can trust that I can use this to pull myself up. That then puts you into a position where you can begin redressing some of these sort of primordial wounds that you came into the world with, or were inflicted on you at, you know, a very, very early age. It gives you that sense of like, there's enough solidity up here, to where I can not just transcend all that brokenness that I still feel down there, but I can actually get down into it, sort of get down into the guts of it, and find ways to redress it, or find ways, again, to compensate it. I mean, some wounds probably can't be healed, but you find better ways to cope with them. You find better ways to allow that trauma that you might, you know, feel sort of in your system back there, to propel you forward, to find the growth that can come out of that sense of brokenness.

[00:38:57] **Keith:** It also gives you a chance to redefine those pains. The way that humans work is, we have forces that pull us in opposite directions. Yes, we have forces that pull us toward being ultra social, securely attached. We have forces in us that make us wanna be by ourselves. Okay? We have forces that make us wanna be active. We have forces that make us wanna be passive. Part of development is recognizing that emotional pain of all sorts, you know, all the shame emotions, the shame family of emotions, the eight Buddhist dangerous thoughts, all those things. All those things will happen. And when you feel them, it's useful to know there's a counterbalancing force in me, and there's a reason that that's there. Just like we're talking about the reason that guilt's there, you know, shame to help us be more pro-social, anger to help us be more active. Well, and also fear is there to have us not take too many risks when we're angry. Gratification is there when it's appropriate to be about myself and not about somebody else.

So as we begin to normalize that, we stop feeling as fucked up, and we just start feeling more that our Wise Self is leading a dynamic system. You know, when you talk about being down the last month, you know, you didn't say "life sucks". You basically said, "you know, I've been having this kind of a dark perspective." So the witness, the wise Corey is more your sense of self observing that discomfort, but not pathologizing Corey for it. Just helping Corey with it. Being, you know, present, contingent, congruent, and marked. Okay? It's just, that's a... to see that happen, that radical acceptance, is magical. Now you suffer a lot less. Well, you know, Ken said it, you hurt more and you suffer less as you expand.

[00:40:53] **Corey:** Hurts more, bothers you less.

[00:40:54] **Keith:** Yeah. And so that's part of this whole process. You know, if I'm securely attached to my kid, it doesn't mean I don't wanna strangle them when they throw a temper tantrum at the grocery store. But I know that I love them, so

I'm going to contain their temper tantrum at the grocery store, and then go do something else, and recognize that, you know, like, one of the reasons I don't work with younger kids, two or three of my most difficult sessions have been when an eight or nine year olds just hijacked the session by just getting locked into something and refusing to do anything else. I look over to the parents and they go, "we don't know what to do." And I go, "neither do I." You know, after 10 or 11, you know, I can at least use my vast capacities for relationship to connect to the kid. But you can dissociate pretty powerfully at eight or nine. So I have more fear of an eight or nine year old doing that than I do of some, you know, 40 year old guy throwing a temper tantrum in the session. I can manage that! "Sit down! You can't yell at your wife, and you can't stand up in this office! You know, alright...

[00:41:59] **Corey:** No, it's totally true. And you know, we're talking about sort of the generational aspect of this, of how, you know, a lot of these sort of insecure attachments can perpetuate themselves from one generation to the next.

I also have to think, Keith, that there are any number of social and cultural factors at play here too. You know, when you mentioned earlier the more traditional, or even going way back, more tribal ways of upbringing, where, you know, it takes a village to raise a kid, and kids had a lot more sort of exposure to a lot more people in their world, whereas today we do, we really do have so much emphasis on, you know, self authorship and on individuality and on, you know, sort of economic competition. And it, it feels like there's been a narrowing in terms of the subcultures that are actually being tasked with raising a child. Which means that, when you have 20 people who are looking after you, there are, that means there's 20 opportunities to find secure attachment somewhere. Right? Whereas if you only have two people that are regularly raising you, and I'm super aware of this because Angie and I don't have any family out here in Colorado with us, so it's me, Angie, and Evie. So we have to keep a really careful eye on this, that we are able to sort of provide what she needs as she continues to develop. But I think that as our society continues to sort of push into this hyper individualistic kind of neoliberal paradigm that we've been sitting with for the last 40 years, and as we get things like, you know, how self-authorship and self-expression results in things like increasing divorce rates, it wouldn't surprise me to find out that we have a, generationally, a whole cohort of kids... you know, kids who are maybe grownups now, because I think it really began with Gen X in a lot of ways, but you start seeing more and more symptoms of insecure attachment as new generations come through. Because of simply the conditions that these kids are being born into.

[00:44:03] **Keith:** I think you're right. Now, again, there's forces in both directions. So to support that thesis, the original study showed 60% of kids securely attached. Then it turned into 55. And I imagine it might be less now. And we have more depression, anxiety, and suicide and suicidality in young people than we ever had before, and the current 14 to 24 year old generation is the least happy

generation that's been studied since people started studying it.

Now, other cultural forces that are contributing to that: one thing is smaller families, one thing is more isolation between families, one thing is both parents have to work hard in the United States, because you know, basically the top 1% of the United States extracts from everybody else, and more and more and more extraction is being done because it's unregulated. And so 90% of the people in this country are struggling, they wanna raise the retirement age, who's that gonna hurt? Poor people, black people, Hispanic people. Because God knows we can't, you know, tax trillionaires.

Now, not to get onto a social agenda here, but, when you begin to make things like that happen, the people at the bottom get more desperate. And when you're more desperate there's not enough room to sit around, be relaxed, and hang out with each other. So yeah, there's a lot of those forces happening.

On the other hand, people know about attachment parenting, people know about emotional coaching and emotional dismissing. People know about how relationships really work. People have more, if they want to use it, they have more capacity to connect at depth with other people, because we have more of those skills. We have a more psychologically sophisticated culture. Now on the other hand, going back, the things that really helped kids in schools connect? Art, music, theater, shop, the things that really, really validated the visual objective and visual spatial thinkers, the ones that were gonna become electricians and the plumbers and the physicists and stuff, those kids are getting much more lost, because the whole No Child Left Behind stupid law teaches people just auditory, sequential, verbal thinkers, and the other kids get lost to the system. Then on the other hand, the schools say if a kid has special needs, we have obligations to help that kid with the special needs. And so you have all these counteracting forces.

[00:46:29] **Corey:** It really is good news, bad news, right? Bad news, we have more fucked up kids in this generation than ever before because of all these pressures that we just listed. The good news is those fucked up kids have more resources that they can pursue in order to transcend their own fucked up-ness.

[00:46:44] **Keith:** Yeah right. The good news is we know about secure attachment. You know, I didn't know about the attachment research. I've been studying psychotherapy and psychology since I was 15. But I didn't start studying attachment theory and interpersonal neurobiology until I'd been in practice for almost 20 years. It's amazing to me that, whoa, it is one of the reasons why I find a new book, like the book on the H Factor system or, or the personalities, or... You go, okay, the universe makes more sense now, and there's less, it feels like less bullshit when I'm dealing with other stuff. You know, the idea that everybody could be helped by psychotherapy always seem like bullshit to me, cuz obviously some people can't. Well now research shows the psychopaths aren't helped by

psychotherapy, things like that.

But the psychoanalyst had always said an intimate relationship is a healing thing, and now we have attachment research and earned secure attachment research, to show that that's very true. So it was just kinda, there's just a... in England for instance, there's a law that says if you do childcare with kids under three, you have to be the same person for at least a year. You have to commit as a childcare person to be available for that child. And they did that because they incorporated the attachment research into the laws about childcare in England. And John Bowlby's son, I've heard him speak, and I've heard, Peter Fonagy, hilarious attachment guy, developmentalization based therapy, at conferences. This has been embraced at least into that part of the social framework. Encouraging, right?

[00:48:25] **Corey:** Yeah. Yeah, and Keith, you said something that rang a bell for me, which was, you know, having a feeling that the world makes sense, that the universe makes sense, can itself become a source of earned security.

[00:48:41] **Keith:** Secure attachment. That's exactly right.

[00:48:43] **Corey:** Yeah. And that for me, I mean, that's been integral in a nutshell, right? I mean, as you mentioned earlier, I might not even be interested in this stuff if it wasn't for sort of the insecurities that I felt in my early life. If I didn't feel like such a misfit, I wouldn't have, you know, so much impetus to try to fit somewhere, and to try to fit in an interesting way somewhere, right? Which is in a lot of ways what led me to Integral. And I can remember some of those, you know, early feelings I had when I first got turned onto integral. It's like, "This is it. I can finally make sense of the world around me, I can make sense of myself, I can see these things that I couldn't quite see before." And that itself created a sense of stability, of solidity, right? That this is knowable. I'm not saying I know it all yet, or that that's even possible, but at least it's knowable. And that gives me this confidence that, if I put one foot in front of the other, the ground will keep me up, I'm not just gonna fall through somewhere.

[00:49:44] **Keith:** And there's a purpose to your development. It's not directionless. I mean, your ontological evolutionary process is significant and important, and you can feel yourself being one of the people laying down tracks in the evolution of consciousness. So feeling committed to supporting the evolution of consciousness, all of a sudden we're all part of the same groove. Which is consciousness expanding, and us surrendering to it as best we can, given who we are.

Now, does that mean that we're securely attached to consciousness? Well, yes and no. It depends on your personal, you know, relationship with consciousness. I mean, this is why people create gods and mythological features, because pure spirit is just a little bit too nebulous. I would rather focus on, "oh it's Krishna.

Krishna knows, accepts and protects me". Or Jesus, you know? Or even Buddha, even though Buddha would've just said, "no, no, I'm gone when I'm dead, I'm not gonna be around looking after you 2000 years from now." But you know, people still want him to do it, you know what I mean? It's like, it doesn't matter what he wants! We project that on, and then we can feel it reflected back, and there's an authenticity to it, because we can feel the love of the universe coming through those forms. And then we go, "well, it's real then." And also we feel them inside us. Yeah, we do. And you know, we're probably giving them the form, but they're giving us the energy, and the energy's not, we're not making that up. You know, that's something that we legitimately feel.

[00:51:33] **Corey:** That's a critically important point, Keith, because it helps, you know, those of us who like to think of ourselves as fancy, highfalutin, second tier people or whatever, so far above all those first tier altitudes...

[00:51:46] **Keith:** I admit it, I've done that on occasion and I apologize profusely for whenever it leaked out someplace.

[00:51:52] **Corey:** Yeah, I mean sure, sometimes we can get a little, you know, opaque with ourselves, and we start taking our treehouse a little too seriously. But, this is the critical thing to remember is that, you know, there are people who live their entire lives stationed at an amber stage of development. And integral reminds us that that is a hundred percent okay, there is nothing wrong with that whatsoever. That's not only what we expect, I mean, I kind of feel like the anatomy of the human species requires people to find healthy stations at each of these stages, so that the entire spiral can keep doing what it does. Right? So there's no integral impetus that like, "oh, you're amber, we need to transform you into orange and then into green." No, people go at their own pace, at their own rate, et cetera.

[00:52:39] **Keith:** So you say, if you're amber, then what I'm interested in is bonding with a part of you that's healthy amber. That's right. That's right. And if you are really good, healthy amber, I don't just wanna bond, I wanna learn.

[00:52:55] **Corey:** That's right.

[00:52:56] **Keith:** When I wanted to learn martial arts, all right, I joined an amber culture, and I did everything they told me to do, including my intentionality. They said, "think about this." Okay. Essentially, "believe this." Okay. "Bow to Mr. Futokoshi when you come in." Yeah. "Bow to each other." Yeah. All this stuff. There was something about that amber culture, there was a strength in it, a beauty that I didn't have, and I hungered for, and by God, you know, it delivered. And it delivered in spades, and it's still delivering. You know, I thank God for that. And you know, you can do the same thing with all of them. You were about to, you know, you can do with red and orange and stuff. Yeah, you can do the same

thing with all of them.

[00:53:45] **Corey:** Well it allows you to more compassionately transcend and include other belief systems that don't necessarily work for you. Because it helps us remember that... like, okay, so for example, you know, this person has a relationship, an exclusive relationship with Jesus Christ, and they describe that relationship in a way that maybe doesn't serve me anymore, isn't the way that I necessarily enact my own sense of spirituality. Right. But I've got a different way of looking at spirit than you do. However, the minute we begin to realize that that relationship with Jesus Christ is probably a source of secure attachment for so many people in this world who can't find that otherwise. Right. That just breaks my heart open, and makes me want to participate with their belief system, and not sort of condescend it.

[00:54:53] **Keith:** You know, I have a fundamentalist cousin, and he and I were sitting drinking wine after his daughter got married, right? And I said, "you know, when we die, you and I are gonna look back on life and we're gonna laugh at our differences. He said, "yeah, Keith, we will." And at that particular point, there wasn't any cognitive dissonance, but if you're a fundamentalist Christian, that's not what you're supposed to believe. You know, Keith's in hell, and I'm in heaven, and he knew I was gonna go to hell. You know, there's there's no way that's gonna happen.

So anyway, now let's go back to just kind of put the cherry on the cake around attachment. So the huge, huge shift with attachment is, for me, is that finally the field noticed that everything's relationships. You know, you read any one of my books, you know, it's somewhere in the introduction is gonna be "everything is relationships". With other people, spirit, the world, life, all the different parts of ourselves. Not only does attachment theory honor that stuff, they began to look at it scientifically to see what were the better relationships, at least in modernity, between infants and caregivers. And then later on, how did that connect with grownups mm-hmm. And how did that cross validate? It also opened up cross validation with all the other systems, you know, enneagram, all the systems, and then it began to open up deeper inquiry about, "okay, now how does this fit with the twin research, and the genetic research that we're seeing, that we are very, very powerful different types of people. Some of us constricted, some of us less constricted genetically, all of us with the capacity, this human superpower to grow and become more securely attached with ourselves, different parts of ourselves, with other people, with life, with the universe. It's just a staggering superpower that every human being, as far as I can tell, has this capacity if they decide to use their human superpower of focused intent and action in service of principle, driven by resolve. People can expand. Or sometimes they just expand by being alive. And . As they live their life, they get wiser. And at a particular point they'll change. That's often how worldviews change. We don't have to do it through work, sometimes we just do it by just trying to be a good person, and all of a sudden I think different things about stuff. I have more choices, I have more

acceptance, and so on.

And so that's the huge gift of attachment theory to the world and to the field. It's generated some very, very powerful forms of treatment, like emotional focused therapy, mentalization based therapy. It's made more understandable a lot of the other treatments that we've all intuitively loved, like gestalt and psychosynthesis and transactional analysis and so on. And it provides a really nice foundation to reach farther, you know, as we learn more about, say, psychedelics, and we learn more about brain chemistry, we learn more about subtle energies and machines and stuff, and learn more about love, and about how to be deeply connected to each other. We have this scaffolding of secure and insecure attachment that can guide us. And so that's what's beautiful about attachment theory.

[00:58:12] **Corey:** Yeah, no, absolutely gorgeous. Keith. This has been a really moving episode for me. Hopefully our audience feels that way too. And it's a perfect example of, I think, one of the reasons, again, that I love doing this show so much with you. Because, you know, we really do, in a lot of ways, we cover all the bases, right? I mean...

[00:58:31] **Keith:** We do.

[00:58:31] **Corey:** You come in here, and you'll send me an email, "Corey, I've got this, you know, here's what I wanna talk about." And it's this third person dynamic, like, let's talk about how this shows up for us and all that. And you know, and you give sort of a third person lecture within the container of our second person, securely attached relationship and friendship with each other, and the second person relationship that we share with our audience. Which then in turn allows me to bring my own first person, like, "Keith, let me tell you, with full sort of vulnerability, how this lands for me and what this is moving inside me, and how I can feel this swelling up and pointing me in a different direction. And it gives me almost a permission to show up in a particular way in order to internalize the third person stuff that you're saying, and the second person love that we share with each other, so that I feel different after the conversation than I do coming into the conversation. And that to me is just like, that is freaking sacred. It's a blessing to be able to do this.

And, you know, you used the phrase "hurts more, bothers you less" earlier, which to me is like the ultimate statement of anti fragility, because it really does integrate vulnerability and resilience together into one seamless whole. And we can notice, you know, all the ways where if either of those poles gets disintegrated from the other, problems emerge. And all of us, I think, have felt numerous different kinds of those problems in our own lives. So it's so nice being able to just connect with you each month, and to bring sort of both of those chambers of our heart, the vulnerability and the resilience, and really get them firing at the same time. It 's just, I love you man, and I love doing this with you.

[01:00:24] **Keith:** I love you too. And I feel the same way. I was talking to Becky about this this morning. You know, it might not sound like it, but I do a lot of preparation for these things. And I said, "you know, I know there's some stuff about this that's gonna come out talking to Corey that I don't know yet." And that happened. There's something magic about it.

And so thank you, I feel the same way. And hopefully we'll do another one next month that'll be, we'll find some other enthusiastic mind blowing thing to talk about.

[01:00:50] **Corey:** You'll gimme some new homework that I can go upstairs again, tell Angie "I've got it all figured out!"

[01:00:54] **Keith:** "I got it all figured out!" Well much love to everybody.

[01:00:59] **Corey:** Yeah. And to you. And yeah, thank you for joining us, everyone, and we'll see you next time. All right. Bye.