Holding Together Through Tough Times
To love at all is to be **vulnerable**. Love anything and your heart will be **wrung** and **possibly broken**. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. **Lock it up** safe in the casket or coffin... But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless place, it will change. **It will not be broken**; it will become **unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable**. To love is to be **vulnerable**.

C.S. Lewis
...We were made to love and be loved...
1) The competence and worthiness of one’s self to receive love and care

2) Trustworthiness and dependability of others to adequately provide for attachment needs

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<th>SELF</th>
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<td><strong>High</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ANXIOUS/PREOCCUPIED</strong></td>
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<td>• happy</td>
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<td>• Overly concerned about others thoughts and views</td>
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<td>• empathic/responsive</td>
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<td>• accepted</td>
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<td>• Seek validation and approval</td>
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<td>• able to be vulnerable</td>
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<td><strong>AVOIDANT/DISMISSING</strong></td>
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<td>• independent</td>
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<td>• does not show emotions readily</td>
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<td>• sees self as helpless</td>
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<td>• high view of self and lower view of others</td>
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<td>• wants closeness but scared of it</td>
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Valuation; Middle Management

Sensory Recognition and survival; Blue-collar employees

Brain Circuitry of Choice

MacLean’s “Triune Brain”

- Neomammalian Complex
- Paleomammalian Complex
- Reptilian Complex
The Autonomic Nervous System
Connection - *a more broad term for Attachment*

There is nothing we fear more than being *disconnected*

- Religion/Spirituality and the concept of death and hell
- Society and a desire to belong; Biology and being “Sluffed-off”

*Solitary confinement has long been known to be one of the most effect “torments” or “torture”*

- What we use for severe punishment
- What we use for other punishment (consider *timeouts*)
Rupture
Attachment Wounds

Chronic Illness
Traumatic Event
Addiction
Infidelity
When you’re going to have a baby, it’s like you’re planning a vacation to Italy. You’re all excited. You get a whole bunch of guidebooks, you learn a few phrases so you can get around, and then it comes time to pack your bags and head for the airport. Only when you land, the stewardess says, ‘WELCOME TO HOLLAND.’ You look at one another in disbelief and shock, saying, “HOLLAND? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I SIGNED UP FOR ITALY.” But they explain that there’s been a change of plan, that you’ve landed in Holland and there you must stay. “BUT I DON’T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HOLLAND!” you say. ‘I DON’T WANT TO STAY!” But stay you do. You go out and buy some new guidebooks, you learn some new phrases, and you meet people you never knew existed. The important thing is that you are not in a bad place filled with despair. You’re simply in a different place than you had planned. It’s slower paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy, but after you’ve been there a little while and you have a chance to catch your breath, you begin to discover that Holland has windmills. Holland has tulips. Holland has Rembrandts. But everyone else you know is busy coming and going from Italy. They’re all bragging about what a great time they had there, and for the rest of your life, you’ll say, “YES, THAT’S WHAT I HAD PLANNED.” The pain of that will never go away. You have to accept that pain, because the loss of that dream, the loss of that plan, is a very, very significant loss. But if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn’t get to go to Italy, you will never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things about Holland.

~Emily Perl Kingsley (1987)
Good relationships are built and not found

- We both have a commitment of making things work. We both have been divorced previously and we both know that is not the better option. We know that there is going to be challenges along the way. We can either learn and work things through with each other or you can give up. If we choose to give up, we are going to run into situations again with another spouse that will be similar and there comes a point where you have to work on it or you keep repeating the same situations (Divorce, Blended Family, Trauma and Abuse)

- Turn toward each other, not away
  - We live 1200 miles from extended family. When we first got married, it would have been so easy to run to family, my mom or sisters, when things got hard, but due to distance, that wasn't an option. I had to rely on my husband, even when he was the one that was causing me to be upset some of the time. I truly feel like that is what has strengthened our marriage in so many ways. He really has become my best friend. I have had to learn how to talk to him about hard things, things that might be conflicting, and he has had to learn how to talk to me in a similar way. This has done really great things for our relationship (Divorce, Blended Family, Trauma and Abuse)

- Anger is not bad, its just a parasite

- Requires both partners commitment
  - It was both of us, trying our hardest (Addiction & Infidelity)
  - I haven’t come to the point where I’m grateful for this trial. But I am grateful I haven’t given up. I have hope that because of our willingness not to quit that our children will be blessed. We will definitely be able to relate if they have hard times in their marriage. It’s easy to quit, but so hard to endure (Addiction & Abuse)
Progress – not Perfection

Reciprocity

Repair

Rupture
Uncertainty as part of the Process

- There was one point during this particular struggle that I was just done. I really didn't know if I could continue on much longer without something changing. I decided to just get out of the house for a minute so I went to check the mail. I cried the whole way to the mailbox, praying that something would change and that things would get better... (Divorce, Blended Family, Trauma and Abuse)
The only way we'll last forever
Learn

• The importance of taking ownership

  • ...[My wife] never did anything to hurt me. I have been the sole bad actor. So I am grateful that she didn’t leave or divorce me when things were at their worst. I love her eternally and strongly, and I am committed with an iron will to stay married to [her] now, and forever, and not just married – happily married. My goal someday is for [her] to honestly say she is currently happily married to me (Addiction & Abuse)

  • Neither one of us is too stubborn to say sorry, and we both are definitely willing and trying to improve...It is so easy to point out what someone else needs to change and just assume all will be well if they only ______ (Divorce, Blended Family, Trauma and Abuse)

• Neuroception of Danger
• And Combat Shame

• the realization that [her] pain was about [her], and not about me [helped me shift my perspectives and attitudes]. I need to focus on loving [her] and literally and metaphorically just holding her hand while she works through her pain and grief and begin to feel better. Focusing on [her] and taking the focus of shame and guilt off me was a good thing to learn. I haven’t learned it perfectly or even well yet, but beginning to learn I think has been a help for us both (Addiction & Abuse)

• Sometimes it’s not about you
• Differentiate true selves from limitations
  
  I love my husband very much. I am grateful that he hasn't given up on me, despite my imperfections. I am grateful he hasn't given up on me, despite the hurt I brought to our marriage from my previous marriage. We have grown so much together and I appreciate him more and more everyday (Divorce, Blended Family, Trauma and Abuse)

• Develop Compassion
  
  We definitely communicate more openly. We are able to talk things out before they become an issue. He is able to empathize more with me and I have learned to see him in a different light and recognize his efforts (Addiction and Infidelity)

  I have a sense of compassion that I don't think I ever would have been able to develop for Cecil. I feel like because of the struggles we have gone through, I understand my husband's views, perspective, feelings, and opinions in a way I never would have. Not only do I understand him better, I feel like I respect him more (Divorce, Blended Family, Trauma and Abuse)

• You want to be married to/in a relationship with them – but perhaps not them and _____.
Supportive Attachments

• Support Groups

• Understanding Family and Friends
  - I think I best found hope through [therapy] and my friends, I was surrounded by amazing people who listened and cared...made the impossible seem possible again someday. I also put my trust in God and turned it over to him, dug deep to understand [that relationship] better and let it transform my life (Addiction & Infidelity)

• Spiritual Connection/Higher Power
  - Praying allowed me to maintain faith that I was loved and not irrelevant (Addiction & Abuse)

• Professional Help
  - I think counseling was key in this effort as well, without constant help we wouldn't have got passed the hurt feelings (Addiction & Infidelity)
Consider

• Triggers will happen

• It gets better with time – the brain is plastic

• Pain doesn’t go away by escaping
Remember

Time is circular and not linear
The unexpected

• A relationship better than you ever could have imagined
  
  • We are in the best place our marriage has been all around, do I wish for a different path to get here, for sure! (Addiction & Infidelity)
  
  • Everything is a learning experience and it brings you closer together if you allow it to. One of the hardest things we have ever gone through as a couple has also been the one thing that has brought us the closest together. During this time we had to learn to rely on one another. It caused us to slow down due to the circumstances, and we were able to bond in a way that probably never would have happened otherwise...It is stronger than it has ever been. That doesn't mean that we don't have trials or struggles. We still do. I love my wife very much and I am willing to work on anything so that we can stay together (Divorce, Blended Family, Trauma and Abuse)
  
  • Our relationship is better than it ever has been. That being said, I also know the second we get lax about things and stop working to strengthen our marriage, things get harder than they need to be (Divorce, Blended Family, Trauma and Abuse)
Expect

• Resilience
  • *I have learned resilience that I otherwise would not have learned* (Chronic Illness)

• Cherish little things
  • *I have learned cherish the little things, something I don’t think could have happened otherwise* (Chronic Illness)

• There is purpose and meaning in suffering
  • *I have learned more fully to trust God* (Chronic Illness)

• Productive pain doesn’t stay forever