



## How to Break Free of Toxic Attachments

**Guest: Jason Prall**

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**[00:00:09] - Alex Howard**

Welcome everyone to this interview where I'm talking with Jason Prall, around attachment styles and how they show up in relationships, and particularly some of the practical pieces that help self-awareness and to break out of these unhealthy habits and patterns.

To give you a little bit of Jason's background, Jason Prall is a health educator, practitioner, author, speaker and filmmaker. In 2018, his independent research and experience led him to create the Human Longevity Project, a nine-part film series that uncovers the true nature of chronic disease in our modern world. And he recently published his first book, *Beyond Longevity*.

So Jason, welcome to have you back. I always enjoy our conversations, and looking forward to getting into this together.

**Jason Prall**

Likewise. Good to see you, Alex.

**Alex Howard**

So we're going to talk about how different attachment styles can impact how we show up and how we experience relationships. So maybe a good starting point is to just introduce some of the different attachment styles and then yeah, let's go from there.

**Jason Prall**

This is an interesting concept that I wish I had been educated on or familiar with just in terms of understanding a map of these things decades ago, because it would have helped me so much in my personal life, right. And it wasn't until I started getting into some of the more therapeutic work that I do that I really got a better grip on this. Right, because some people never even heard of attachment styles and I think it's becoming a little bit more popular now. But for those who aren't familiar, what attachment is, it's essentially the idea of bonding to another. Right, as infants we require our caregiver's attention, and so depending on the relationship and how the caregiver showed up on a regular basis throughout our youth, that sort of sets our attachment style later in life. So for me, as a thirty-something, when I discovered attachment styles and I'm thinking, oh my gosh, I now understand this sort of thing that I intrinsically knew about myself, but it has a

psychological underpinning. It has this map that somebody has really detailed out, and Bowlby was kind of the big one who came up with this idea of attachment theory.

**[00:02:37]**

Essentially, there's sort of three main types that we can look at. One is the secure attachment, right? This is where we all hope to be eventually, and hopefully we even got there in our youth. But if we develop a secure attachment style, then we relate to others in a very healthy way on a regular basis. It doesn't mean there can't be unhealthy relationships, it just means we understand, we have it imprinted actually in our psychological being, what a healthy attachment looks like, what a healthy relationship looks and feels like, perhaps more importantly. We know what that feels like in our body and our mind sort of represents this and projects this into the world.

The other attachment style that is very common is an anxious attachment style and this is maybe if you think about a rom-com, right? I'm actually a fan of rom-coms because they actually give us so much insight to human psychology, right, and sort of in the standard rom-com, you either have the male lead or the female lead. One of them tends to be expressing an anxious attachment style, which is to say that when they're in a relationship, when there's a bond starting to happen and there's a feeling of connection, there gets to be a point in that process where the one who has an anxious attachment style is afraid that that bond is going to go away.

They're so afraid that it's going to leave that they grip onto that relationship so tightly, right? And so there's this fear that it's going to leave any moment. So they grip on tight and they get closer and they get closer and the other person can actually feel that. And if the other person has a secure attachment style, they may be able to navigate that with ease and not get freaked out. But if the other person and the other partner typically in a rom-com, you would see that they have the other attachment style, which is common, which is avoidant. And so this is the person that when there's a bond starting to happen, when there's a connection starting to happen, then they feel that and they feel, okay, there's something here, then they start to get scared.

They actually start to pull away because they realize that if they get too close, that if that bond really takes hold, then they're going to get hurt and so they leave. Right? And so again, we've all seen this in rom-coms and many of us have probably experienced this both on the receiving end and perhaps if we have a self-awareness that we've done that to others, or maybe we have an avoidant attachment style, so the bond starts to happen and they kind of pull away.

And then if you have two people, one has an avoidant, the other one has an anxious. Now you got this crazy dynamic of as soon as this natural bond starts to happen, one person's freaking out that it's going to go away and ironically, they start pressing harder on the other and the one with the avoidance starts going, oh my God, oh my God. And to some degree, right? Right. In other words, they're feeling this like overwhelming pressure. And for that person, even if it was a healthy attachment style, even if the other person has this healthy bonding, this secure attachment, they're going to actually feel this is not safe and they're going to pull. So then we have this crazy dynamic and we have typically in the rom-coms, it's the female that has the anxious and they're chasing and the guy is the avoidant. So he's pulling away and then it falls apart and it's a huge mess, right? So these are the kind of the three main, and then there's a fourth one that we might consider as well, that is kind of this dual nature of anxious and avoidant. And this is a person that has developed both strategies in relationships and depending on the other person and the

dynamic, they may dip into avoidant to keep themselves safe or they may slide into the anxious to try to find safety as well.

### **[00:06:18] - Alex Howard**

And I think one of the things that's really important in what you're saying is that we have these habits and these patterns and these styles of how we are, but then we just normalized that right? And then we get in resonance with, so for example, if we have an anxious style, we get in resonance, for example, because it's what feels familiar being with someone that's avoidant. And then we can't understand why we go from relationship to relationship, but the same dynamics play out.

### **Jason Prall**

That's right. And it becomes very difficult to really sort of see ourselves. That's why I love this map, because I feel like if I had this explanation and this understanding and this map earlier in life, I could have at least sort of played with the idea of "where am I?". Right, where am I on this spectrum? And that's what I should say too, is that this is a spectrum. It's not like you're one or the other or what have you. There's actually a dynamic spectrum. We can be anywhere. In other words, we can be relatively secure, but then still exhibit a little bit of anxiousness sometimes or a little bit of avoidance sometimes, right? So it really depends on the dynamic of the relationship. But the other, I think, important part too. Again, I wish I'd realized this. Is because when the other person is exhibiting one of these styles, now I can have compassion, I can have an understanding, oh, that's what's happening here, right? They're just feeling anxious. And so if I have somebody exhibiting an anxious attachment style against me and it feels like a little pressurizing, I can actually kind of relax.

In other words, as you get to familiarize yourself with these styles and what the fundamental need is for the person, now we can meet the need and now the attachment style can relax, so to speak. And so this becomes the game in relationship is; can I understand myself, can I understand the other? And then not only that and have compassion for that, but how do I give the other or myself what is truly needed in the moment and perhaps over time to really meet those needs on a regular basis so that attachment style can actually become go from anxious to secure, or avoidant to secure. And that's really the goal is to develop better relationships dynamic with myself and with the other. And so these can be healed, these can be remedied, these can be moved forward into a more secure place. And when that happens, the relationship starts to get easy, and then we dip into our attachment styles and we can see them expressed every now and again. Whenever we get freaked out, then we can have compassion, we can meet them, right? So it makes it so much easier. But if we're blind to this, this very basic psychology and the underlying needs, then we're going to be caught.

We're going to get caught in these games, and we're going to loop in these things, because as you pointed out, we're kind of blind to them because we have developed them for most of us as adults for decades, and we've played them out many, many times over. Right. And again, we tend to blame the other person. If we're anxious person, we blame the other person and they're pulling away. I can't feel close to you. Right? That's what's interesting for the anxious one. They can actually say, "I never feel close to you", and they'll blame it on the other person. But it's actually the anxiousness that is preventing the connection. Even though it seeks it and wants it so badly, it can actually block the real authentic connection. So it's this very weird paradox we can get into, and much of it can be self-generated.

**[00:09:41] - Alex Howard**

Well, I think sometimes the resistance people can have when we bring forth maps like this is they think, well, that's a prison sentence. That means I've got these dynamics and therefore that's how it's always going to be. And I think what's exciting in what you're saying is that ultimately that's a message of hope, because this is the map of also how to get out of the prison. Right. I don't know if you ever saw the TV series Prison Break where the guy gets into prison with the map of all the tattoos on his body. But it strikes me that that's the power of having clarity, that this is how we've been wired. So this is the wiring that we need to change or the wiring that we need to reset.

**Jason Prall**

Totally. Yeah. And this is the thing, I think, that we really can benefit from remembering. Humans are supremely adaptable beings. We will adapt to our environment. And the most adaptable time in our life is when we're a child, when we're an infant. We are supremely adaptable, right. We are moldable. And so in childhood, when we experience the same thing over and over again. We will mold. We will adapt to that environmental factor. And the other part of us, though, even though we are adaptable, we can lay these grooves and we get into this functional state that works. So in other words, we find an adaptation that works, and we can stay with it for a long time if that gets really ingrained. And so, again, we can find our way out of that. But as we get older, again, we're not quite as adaptable. When we're infants our brain is forming. It's literally molding and forming essentially to the environment. The neurons that are firing together are wiring together, right? This is what's happening in real-time as we're infants and as we get older we still have neuroplasticity, a very important aspect to what we're talking about here, which is the brain can remodel can rewire itself, right?

It just takes a little bit more work and it takes repetition. That's the most important thing here too is to recognize that we can undo this. We just need that repetition and we generally need some kind of support in the process. It's hard to do this stuff all on our own. And I think really apropos for this summit, anything that has to do with relational wounding generally requires relational support. It's very hard to kind of meditate our way out of this stuff or do ayahuasca by ourselves and get out of this stuff. It can happen. It's just much more difficult because the wounding required another being. So the repair also requires another being, almost always, right? So it's really important to remember this stuff that if we want to fix relational issues, it requires a relational counterpart and that therein kind of lies the rub, right? Like we actually have to get into the muck and figure out what's going on relationally and that's what's going to get us out of this stuff.

**Alex Howard**

I think it's a really important point and I think it's also often one of the challenges is that we need to work relationally to address these issues. But the very place from which we meet those relationships is from the place of the issues, right?

**Jason Prall**

That's right.

**[00:12:57] - Alex Howard**

I'm curious as to what you find helps us navigate differently. In a sense, we start to get awareness of these patterns that are happening. How can we, whilst there's still momentum within the pattern, how can we work skillfully and elegantly, relationally, to start to break free?

**Jason Prall**

For me, and this may not be required, but for me it's always helpful to recognize why did the pattern show up? In other words, what was the need that was missed, that created this pattern or this adaptation when I was in my youth? And so for the anxious attachment style, this is the infant or the small being that was around a caregiver, and when they cried when they reached, this is a very common thing you see infants do, they reach, whenever they reached or they cried, they had a need, right? Could be changing a diaper, could be hungry, could be anything that an infant needs, right? Could be tired, could just be connection, right? They feel alone and scared. Whatever the case is, they have a fundamental need and the caregiver wasn't really able. They met the need sort of, kind of sometimes, but didn't do it fully, they didn't fully meet the need. Or they met the need every so often, but it wasn't regular enough. And so imagine, you're a very intelligent infant being, but doesn't have true cognition, but has built-in intelligence. Right? So imagine that you reach and you cry and you get met.

Awesome. Well, what you going to do next time you have a need? You're going to cry and you're going to reach. You're going to do the same strategy, right? Well, if it's not met, well, then what are you going to try? You're going to try other things? Okay, let me try crying louder. Let me try really wailing and then oh, it got met. Cool. Okay, now I know crying louder works. Let me try this again. Next time I have a need met. I cry louder again. It doesn't get met. I cry louder and louder. I throw a fit, whatever the case is. Right, and this can be a six month old, a two year old, a four year old, all through the I have a three year old, so I see him doing some of these strategies. Right?

**Alex Howard**

You're living the research on this topic.

**Jason Prall**

Yeah, yes, this is real-time. This is the pattern that starts to develop, is that the infant or the young one has a need and it gets met. And they feel so good and so they keep doing this, but it's not met enough. When they get it and it leaves, or they're not sure if it's going to come. There's a very strong desire for the secure attachment, for this relational sort of healing or repair that's happening day by day, multiple times a day as an infant. So they're going to get very anxious because it's there sometimes, but it's not there other times. They can't count on it.

So whenever it's there, it's like they want to hold on for dear life. Like, don't leave it's here. I know that if I let this go and I have another need later, I'm not sure if it's going to be here. Right, so that's the pattern that develops psychologically and energetically in the biology, right. So we can actually express these attachment styles not only in relation, in terms of relationships, but literally in the body, things will shift and this will express in a certain way in the biology and in the physiology.

**[00:16:25]**

Right. So that's how kind of the anxious attachment style develops. And again, this is over time, and I should say before I go on to the avoidant, that to develop a secure attachment only requires like 30 or 40% of the time the caregiver getting it right. That's kind of what the research shows. So the point is, as a parent, you don't actually need to be perfect. You can miss a lot and the infant still kind of can get that secure attachment. So that said, many of us, I would say most of us did not get secure attachment as infants. Part of this was because of the cry it out method that was very popular when I was a baby and probably even before that. There's all kinds of these methods that we just weren't aware of as parents to meet the needs of our children. And so many of us didn't get the secure attachment that we really were hoping for. Now the avoidant is kind of the next step in that progression. In other words, the infant is crying and reaching and has a need and it gets met sometimes, but really not very often.

So next time they yell louder. They scream louder and it doesn't get met. The caregiver doesn't show up or they show up, but they don't really meet the need that the infant is requiring. So eventually the infant or the young one is going to stop screaming because it's kind of like wasting energy. It's too much. And so I'm not going to even try. I'm just going to shut down because I'm in pain. I have a need, I have an emotional need, I have a physical need, whatever the case is, and it's not getting met. And that's painful. It is painful just to sit there in this emotional need, right? It's painful as adults. Most adults don't do this. Well, I certainly don't. When I have an emotional need, it's hard for me to just sit in it. I have to distract myself. I have to go do something, right? Or if I'm aware, then I might go get another being to help me process this emotional need in real time. But that's maybe not even all that often, right? So as an infant, this is really painful just to sit in this emotional need, fear, anxiety, worry, whatever the case is.

And so they're sitting there and then they start to shut off. They start to close off their emotion. They start to push away the caregiver almost because they don't want to develop this connection. They feel like it's not worth it because the caregiver is there sometimes, but not often enough. And so it's almost like shutting down the emotional state whenever this bond comes because you can develop it. But it's so hurtful when it leaves. It's so painful when it leaves and doesn't come back, right? So this avoidant attachment is kind of like the next progression after the anxious, so to speak. Now many of us learned both of these strategies. In other words, why would an infant do that? Why would they close off? Because it's safer. Because it feels good. Because it feels better than sitting in agony and emotional distress, right? So these are all fundamental needs and we're always finding safety as infants. That is the number one thing as a being is safety. Safety is primary, then connection. So if the connection is not there, I'm going to dip back into safety and do whatever I can to find safety. And if safety means shutting myself off to that connection because the connection is painful and it doesn't work and I can't count on it, then I'm going to just rest in safety and just completely avoid connection, right?

So these are the things that are subconsciously happening as infants, as two year olds, as four year olds, as six year olds, et cetera. And again the caregivers, if they're not attuned, if they're not aware of this happening, then this will continue all through even the teenage years too, which we go through another little sort of psychological thing when we get into our teenage years, right? So we require some of these same things, actually, as we revisit our teenage years, we go through some of this same type of thing along with some other interesting psychological developments. And so most of us get into our teens, our early twenties, thirties, and we haven't got these crucial needs met on a regular basis and these attachment styles have formed. So our psychological reality has been created. Our internal working model is there and projected on the world. And so

even though we really, really desire and crave connection and relationship and love, that's easy. We actually don't know how to actually rest into that loving connection because it wasn't present enough for us to map it internally. Our neurology, our psychology, our energy, everything about us, we didn't get enough of it to map it.

And so we actually don't really know what it looks and feels like. All we know is that when we start to get in it, we know danger is coming and so we rely on our strategies. So this is the wild thing, is that we may touch it every now and again and it feels so good, but then the pattern kicks in and goes remember, this is going to leave, so do whatever you can. Either avoid or really hold on tight so that we don't get hurt.

### **Alex Howard**

You know it's interesting, I was reflecting as you were talking, Jason, that one of the conclusions we often draw when we go through repetitive dynamics that lead to unhappiness in relationship is that something in us is broken or we're dysfunctional, or we don't have what it takes to be in a healthy relationship. But what struck me as you were talking is actually the brilliance and the wisdom and the intelligence of how we learn to respond in these ways. Not that they're necessarily what's most helpful in our lives now, but they allowed us to survive those enormously difficult and tricky periods. The problem is that as you said earlier, what was helpful then is now causing all of these challenges and all of these problems that we have. And so someone who's watching this, who's firstly kind of the narrative has become, how dysfunctional they are, maybe you can just talk briefly to that, but also what that then means coming back to where you started a little bit earlier around how they really start to break free from this.

### **Jason Prall**

Yeah, it's important to remember that as an infant we basically lack a prefrontal cortex. We can't think about these things like we can as adults, I can cognize, I can understand this stuff. And my adult brain can help make sense of this sort of child infant brain, right? But the child infant brain can't make sense of this. So it's just experiencing it, right? So this is the tricky part. It feels like we're broken, right? It feels like there's something wrong with me. It's just that we didn't get it mapped. If you've never seen the color green, I can sit here and try to explain it to you all day long, but it's not going to register because you haven't seen the color green. Once you see the color green, you instantly know, okay, now that's green. And you can recognize it next time you see green. Okay, that's green. You know, green. But before that, we can't really make the connection and so we really need to get mirrored and this needs to get mapped in our system, right? So what I explained here of understanding the map, that's great, but that's not the territory.

We can't confuse the map for the territory. We can't just read about this and become an expert in it by reading all the books and studying it. We actually have to map it in our system. So that means we need somebody that can actually give us what we never got, which is repetitive secure attachment.

Now, you can find this in a relationship. If you're lucky enough, and your partner has secure attachment, this would be a good opportunity that if you're having some struggles with them and you've read all the stuff and you actually feel like, okay, they actually do have, I think, a secure attachment, because I don't see them exhibiting the avoidant behaviors or anxious behaviors too often. You can actually explain this to them and help map that for them and then they can catch you. They can hold you in these attachment styles, and as you show up with your anxiousness

now, you can recognize that they can help point it out and we can hold it together. In other words, you show up as this anxious attachment or this avoidant attachment style, secure attached person just holds it and they recognize you for who you are and they give you what you need, which is sometimes if you have an avoidant, then you need a little bit of space, but you're holding love and compassion and connection even though there's a degree of increased space.

**[00:25:11]**

So you might need a little spaciousness, but as long as you pull back with your avoidance and the other person's holding in other words, they're not chasing you, but they're not drawing away either. And I'm talking energetically, emotionally, verbally, physically, all the things, right? And they're holding that really well, then they can wait for you to come back as you start to find safety. Okay, they didn't leave. Cool. They're still here, right? So that's what we require.

Same thing with the anxious person. They're smothering the person who's got a secure attachment. They just hold and maybe they give them exactly what, they squeeze them tight, they meet them in that anxiousness, right? And then the anxiousness can relax. And now this may need to be happening over and over again in that real relationship. So that's kind of maybe a real world relational dynamic of a married couple or somebody that they're seriously dating or what have you. That can be effective. It may take a while. It can take years sometimes. And usually what you see is a slow progression. It's getting better, it's getting better, it's getting better.

In fact, I'm of the opinion that we can forever deepen our secure attachment. So there may never be a bottom to this as to how deep we can get with our secure attachment styles. So it's a thing that we can all work on. So that's one way. The other way I think is that we can actually find a therapist that actually specializes in this type of repair work or that generally understands how to meet the person's need, right?

Because as a therapist, when somebody walks into my office, essentially I'm viewing them as an adult. They have an adult and they have a child or generally an orphanage, a bunch of children, right? And so the adult is there too and we need to meet the child or meet the child parts. And so that's generally what a therapist can do is they can see the person that's in front of them and give the child what it needs or what it didn't get.

And as those needs get met over and over again and the caregiver in this case the therapist can show up in the way that they didn't get as infants or as children. Now those wounds can get repaired. And so this is the kind of the process is this repair.

There's a great modality that is not very widely known. It's maybe hard to find a practitioner but if you happen to have one in your area, it's called Adult Attachment Repair Model. Fantastic model. It's very interesting. It doesn't require much in lieu of therapy like you're just kind of holding a stick. But the practitioner is doing some really amazing things energetically. So there's some really cool things like that that you can do. But this is probably one of the best ways to expedite the healing process.

The repair process is to work with a therapist, whether it's Adult Attachment Repair Model or another modality, but specifically addressing this attachment style or the relational needs that didn't get met.



## **[00:28:11] - Alex Howard**

It strikes me as well that you were talking about when you're in a relationship dynamic with this that the awareness in oneself, but also the bravery for transparency and authentic relating really with that other person, that it's one thing, the patterns play out, but it's like what do we do then? Are we judging and blaming and shaming ourselves or the other person? Or is there in a way what I'm hearing you say is that the gift that we can give and the gift that we can receive is actually to allow that person to have that response, but to stay in loving relationship with them anyway.

## **Jason Prall**

Yeah. And allow ourselves to have that response, right? So with all of my, let's say peccadillos psychologically that I'm navigating in life, there's generally what happens is that the first step is I get caught. In other words, I'm in it. I'm contracted in it and I don't know that I'm in it, right? This can be a relational thing. This can be a number of other patterns or parts or things that might show up that again, these are strategies, right? These are safety strategies or connection strategies that we have created, right? We can call this ego, we can call this our personality, whatever the case is. These are strategies that we've all created for ourselves. And generally these strategies are so well ingrained and they worked at some point so well and they may still work to some degree that we don't know that we're in them. And so when we express them, when we are in them first, there's generally a point of I don't know that I'm in it and so oftentimes it's helpful that another person can lovingly point them out. Because if you point them out too hard -

## **Alex Howard**

Takes some skill that, doesn't it?

## **Jason Prall**

It does. And if you're really good at it, you'll actually know when not to do it. So even though you might catch somebody in a part or in a pattern, there's a period of saying, okay, this is not the time to point out their pattern because it's going to bring up another part and pattern that's going to dominate and it's going to create this crazy spiral. And if there's enough of their parts and patterns, they're going to trigger my parts and patterns. And then we're just a couple of four year olds arguing. So there's actually an attunement of some of this of pointing out patterns and strategies that there's a brilliant time to do that. So you have to kind of feel into that and go "I kind of notice here's what I'm noticing. Do you think this is maybe one of the sort of anxious parts coming up here?" These type of things where you're actually inviting in the awareness to oneself. And so for me I can get caught in a part or a pattern or strategy and then either somebody can point it out. If I have again somebody who's really good at that, that's helpful, or generally there'll be a point at which I kind of pop out and I go "Ah I see what I'm doing here, look at this", right?

And so you can have this dual awareness, this little part, this little five year old that's caught in a pattern. And then you have the adult version that goes, I see you. There you are. Okay, cool. Interesting. And you can actually hold this. You can actually hold awareness and still play out the pattern, which is an interesting practice as well. So it's almost like you caught the pattern and instead of interrupting the pattern, you just let it fully express while putting an awareness on it, putting an eye on it, just to see kind of what wants to come out. Right, so that's an interesting practice, takes a lot of skill. So some of this is you can play with this stuff. I think that's the most important thing that I've learned with all these things that I "do wrong" or that I'm broken is that I

can actually watch them, play with them, recognize them and go "oh, wow, that's a cool strategy, look what I'm doing here." And then as you sort of study yourself in this sort of dual awareness state, now, the next time it shows up, you catch it faster. Right?

**[00:32:03]**

And the idea is rarely, I would say maybe never, but certainly rarely do you want to squash the pattern right on sight, oh, found it, and just beat it down. It's like we really want to bring loving curiosity and awareness to it. The curiosity is really cool because you'll learn more. So again, if you can watch the part play out or you can study others in the same way, instead of just pointing out somebody's strategy, "oh, I see you're in this - stop projecting this thing on me. And it's your fault because you're in this strategy." And that's definitely not the way to go.

**Alex Howard**

Wonder why it doesn't get well received?

**Jason Prall**

Yeah, exactly. Because the key thing to remember with all of these strategies is that there's an underlying need. And that need is never somebody to point it out and say, you're wrong. That's never the need. The need is always something around safety, connection. It's always this open hearted, loving. It's generally like the pure mama energy of just like, as you are, my dear. Right. Like, I love you. No matter what you're doing, I love you. That's kind of generally what we've always needed.

And so you can give that and you can watch somebody play out their little strategies and so you can sort of study them, so to speak. Right, but it's in the vein of trying to understand them, trying to gain compassion for what's happening. Why does this person act out this way? What's happening here? What is the need?

And as you study and feel into. This is a big part, too, is if you're a feeler, this is really key. And if you're not a feeler, I would say try to get good at feeling because you'll gain a lot of information this way. But as you feel into it now, you can start to really track what is the need and when do I deliver it and how do I deliver it?

How hard do I deliver it? How soft do I deliver it? It's a very feminine aspect to healing a lot of this stuff, which is the feeling and the attunement and the gentleness and sometimes the sternness. But it's generally this feeling of when and how to deliver the actual need. So it's really important to remember there's an underlying need. So when somebody's freaking out, sometimes it's hard to really recognize that there's an unmet need from a two year old or a three year old.

**Alex Howard**

It also strikes me in what you're saying, Jason. The key thing really is loving the person and staying in relationship with the person even if the behavior is toxic, problematic and unhelpful, and in a way that really relies upon us to be able to stay steady and stay present and not get triggered and pulled into our own reactivity.

### **[00:34:40] - Jason Prall**

Absolutely. And this is what's cool is that many of us and many relationships, we don't have one person that's in a secure attachment style. So we've got an avoidant and an avoidant and avoidant and anxious and we've got all this kind of like strategies just on strategies. So sometimes it's hard to even get out of that dynamic. And so there's two things I want to say to that. One is that's the advantage of sort of working on yourself. And so as you heal your own attachment wounds and you become more secure - You go through life in such a - it's so much easier because this is not just personal loving romantic relationships, this is relationships with parents, with children, with coworkers, with everybody. Because these patterns and many other patterns also get exhibited, you can remain secure.

And so as you develop a greater secure attachment style, your relation to everything starts to improve. And now anybody that you come across now you can hold for them. You can actually be the healing modality that they needed for so long. Right? Like that's the cool part is that there's a real advantage to healing yourself and healing those wounds and getting those needs met in your own being because now you become the healer for others and you can hold it without so much stress, right?

Relationships are in no doubt the most stressful thing that we carry in this world. Right? I mean, it is constant, whether it's parents and children and siblings. It's a crazy dynamic out there - to heal these wounds within ourselves become the most powerful tool that we can bring to ourselves and to others.

### **Alex Howard**

I think also because it's so impactful one of the things that's also challenging is that it's not just, as you've been saying, it's not just in our intimate relationship, it's our family relationships, our friendships, it's the groups that we're in. It's our work environment that we're in. So maybe as we start to approach the end, maybe you can say a few words about, for example, how this shows up in the workplace or in group dynamics where we've perhaps normalized to these certain styles and patterns and then almost all the more frustrating it's not just in our intimate relationship, but it's in these other places as well that it's showing up.

### **Jason Prall**

Yeah. So again, we are relational beings, right? Connection - it's such a fundamental human need and it starts with our caregivers, right? That's the first point of connection that we start to form, but then after that we start to form connection with everybody around us, right? So we start to form connections with our baseball coaches and our coworkers, our bosses. And so if we start to feel any of these connections start to fray, that can trigger any of these patterns, right? So now we're going to start to see dynamics start to shift and instead of being in a very connected, easeful relationship with my coworker, now I'm afraid that the connection that we need to get our work done and to work well together, if that's starting to fray now, it's going to start to show up as gossip, it's going to start to show up as blame - the dynamic is going to work itself out in a number of ways but it's all because the connection is starting to get thin. And so if we can recognize that and we can hold that, and this is the truth with all relationships, is that they're going to go through ebbs and flows, right?

**[00:38:16]**

So - with a secure attachment style, with an understanding of these dynamics, now we can hold while this connection starts to ebb and flow and some just you let go of and that's okay too, right? And so sometimes this is another part that we don't even really want to talk about too often is connections need to be released. We actually need to separate. And as crazy it is from parents, sometimes from siblings, from children, from even the closest people, it's important that we actually let go. And so if we have this anxious attachment style and this relationship is better off being let go, then now we can create this weird dynamic. And you see this play out in romantic relationships where the breakup needs to happen, but one person just won't let it go. And so it can just build and build and build and it's going to show up as more chaos externally, internally, it's going to totally jack up our physiology. So this is the other thing that's a whole other talk, but every genetic expression that we have starts to modify based off of all these relationships, right? So the key here too is that - as the relationship gets rocky, as we have some of these misses in our dynamics with the secure attachment style, as we build this secure attachment style, then we can actually go to the person and go "I'm sorry, I was really out of line there and I really didn't mean that. I apologize and I should have done this." Right?

So not only is that a mature way to handle any disagreement or any quarrel that we might have, but it's actually going to exhibit the need that the other person is craving. In other words, the other person is craving safety too. Whenever we get into this crazy dynamic. And if you're the one that says, "I'm sorry, that was really my fault. I really shouldn't have done this, and I apologize, and will you forgive me" and these type of things. Now the other person's system can go "Ah". Okay. He's not going to leave. She's not going to leave, whatever the case is. Right? So as these dynamics start to build, they literally can build and build and build and build, and at some point we need to be able to sort of slice through that, right? And the easiest way is to have that secure attachment style so that we can be secure in ourselves, be secure in this relationship. That if I accept responsibility and I do say that I was wrong, that the other person's not going to sort of - because the tendency the reason many of us don't say I was wrong, it's my fault, is because we think the other person is going to sort of jump on that bandwagon and say "Yes it was, you're the worst, and I'm out of here."

Right? That's kind of the energetic feeling of that. And so with the security, we can say I'm wrong, it's my fault, I really apologize, it won't happen again, I'll do my best, blah, blah, blah. Now that secure attachment can actually help the other person develop a more secure attachment as well, and it ratchets down the tensions. And again, that's in work relationships, that's in all kinds of family dynamics too. So again, secure attachment, really there's a reason it's so important in adulthood is because it's so fundamental in childhood. It is the second sort of factor in our development, right? One being the development of safety. And this actually kind of plays into the safety too, but it's more in the line of connection. Can I maintain connection. Right? So it's fundamental to our development and it becomes so intrinsic to our reality as adults, no matter how old we are.

### **Alex Howard**

I also want to just pick on something you said just to amplify it, which is that if someone does come to us in relationship and expresses regret or apology, it's always important to hold that gently, right? If you totally want someone to come forward and to express vulnerability, it's really important that we hold that and we support that.

**[00:42:06] - Jason Prall**

And when we do that, we both meet each other there. In other words, one person takes the leap and expresses this vulnerability and says, "I'm sorry, it's my fault, blah." And the other person can then meet them and say, "It's okay, I understand. I love you too." Then the person who expressed vulnerability, now they get affirmation for ah, it's actually safe for me to do that. Right. So this is the repair in real-time. So anytime somebody's sincerely apologizing to you, it's really really beneficial for you to acknowledge that and meet them in the vulnerability, because that reinforces that behavior, reinforces that psychology, reinforces the nervous system. It is more profound than I think many of us realize. It's very easy to accept an apology and go, yeah, okay, thank you. But there's still a wall up, and so that actually misses what's really important there. And so there's an opportunity. We have all these little micro opportunities along the way. And if we can really appreciate when those opportunities are there and meet that, then all of this stuff starts to not only get resolved in the moment, it starts to deepen in the actual repair that was generally missed.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah I think that's a really important point, that rather than relationships being a perpetuation of the cycle of suffering, they actually become the place that we heal. I think that's really powerful.

**Jason Prall**

Totally.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. I'm mindful that we're out of time, but I'd love you to say a bit more about how people can find out more about you and your work and maybe some of what they can find as well.

**Jason Prall**

Yeah, they can find me at [awakenedhealthacademy.com](https://awakenedhealthacademy.com). That's where I have a lot of my documentary film series and various interviews and summits and things that I've produced over the years. And then you can find my book, *Beyond Longevity*. You can find that on Amazon anywhere books are sold, really. Those are probably the two best places.

**Alex Howard**

Amazing. Jason, thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

**Jason Prall**

Thanks, Alex.