

## Thriving relationships through Inner Bonding

**Guest: Dr. Margaret Paul**

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### **Meagen Gibson - [00:00:09]**

Hello and welcome to this interview. Today I'm speaking with Dr. Margaret Paul, a best selling author, relationship expert, and co-author of *The Powerful Inner Bonding Self Healing Process*.

Her book titles include *Do I Have to Give Up Being Me to Be Loved By You?*, *Healing Your Aloneness*, *Inner Bonding* and the recently released *Diet for Divine Connection* and *The Inner Bonding Workbook*.

Margaret has successfully worked with hundreds of thousands around the world and taught classes and seminars for over 53 years.

Margaret Paul, thank you so much for being with me today.

### **Dr. Margaret Paul**

You're welcome. I'm looking forward to it.

### **Meagen Gibson**

So I wanted to start and talk about why it's so important to love yourself.

### **Dr. Margaret Paul**

Okay, that's a big topic. The main issue is that you're either loving yourself or you're abandoning yourself. When you abandon yourself, what's happening is that you're creating a sense of emptiness and a sense of aloneness inside, and that wants to get filled up.

And so when we're in a relationship, when we're abandoning ourselves and we try and have control over getting love from somebody else, and since we attracted our common level of self abandonment or self love, that other person is trying to have control over getting our love. That's called the codependent relationship. It obviously doesn't work well.

But so many of us have been brought up to believe that our self worth and our safety and our sense of well being is dependent on somebody else loving us. And there's a big confusion between getting love and sharing love. And sharing love is one of the greatest experiences in life. But in order to share love, you have to have love inside to share. And if you're not loving yourself, there is no love inside to share. There's just that emptiness and that aloneness and that neediness and that desire to control.

So not only does it ruin relationships to not love yourself, but when you're not loving yourself, it's like not loving a baby. If you imagine that your soul, that's yourself, your essence, is your feeling self, and instead of attending to those feelings and taking responsibility for them, you're ignoring them. Well, if you have a baby who's crying, you ignore the baby, the baby gets desperate and frantic and eventually just shuts down and feels horrible and feels worthless. That's what happens on the inner

level when we abandon ourselves rather than learn to love ourselves. We feel anxious and depressed and angry and alone and empty and jealous and guilty and shamed and all these really hard feelings that people go into therapy for or they take drugs for.

And they don't realize that the real source most of the time, not always, but most of the time the real cause of that is self abandonment rather than self love. And of course, many people don't even understand self love. They think it's like, oh, I get my nails done and I take a bath. They don't understand that it's really about learning to take emotional responsibility and other forms of responsibility for ourselves, which we can talk more about.

### **Meagen Gibson - [00:03:35]**

And so now that we really have a ground for understanding why self love is so important, can you talk to me about... And we know what it is. And it's not bubble baths and taking time to read your favorite romance novel by yourself. What does self love really look like?

### **Dr. Margaret Paul**

Well, again, it looks very much like if you wanted to be a loving parent for a baby, you don't put the baby in the bed, in the crib and go out to lunch. You don't just leave the baby. But that's what people do on the inner level. And what I call it is having your inner baby monitor on, which is that you learn to be in your body because that's where your feelings are.

And unfortunately, so many of us have learned to ignore our feelings. We've been taught that we can't trust our feelings, that they're overwhelming, we can't handle them. And of course, when we were little, we couldn't. We were too little to handle big feelings. But we're not little. And it's vitally important for us to learn to lovingly, learn from and manage our feelings. And that's what loving ourselves emotionally is all about. It's about recognizing that the painful feelings, like I mentioned, of anxiety and depression, this is information. This is letting us know that we're abandoning ourselves. We're not attending to ourselves.

It can also let us know that we're eating badly because another cause of anxiety and depression comes from the brain. Well, it comes from the gut actually. When your gut is out of balance and the bad bacteria take over, then there's toxins, they go up into the brain and they can cause anxiety and depression. But the point is, the feelings have information, they're telling you something's wrong, and you have to pay attention. Just like when the babies cry, you have to pay attention.

But most of us, because we didn't have role modeling for attending to our feelings, when we grew up and we didn't have parents who knew how to manage their feelings, we learned to be up in our heads. And when I started to practice inner bonding 37 years ago now, I was in my head. It took me a lot of practice to get inside my body and feel, even know that I had a feeling. I was so used to being tuned into other people's feelings and taking care of their feelings, but not at all used to attending to mine. I thought, oh, if I'm just taking care of everybody else's feelings, then they'll take care of mine. And anybody who's been doing that knows that that doesn't work at all. You just get depleted.

And at some point, I was really sick from giving and giving and giving and not getting it back. And so it took me a while to learn to live from my body and learn to attend to my feelings and learn from them and take responsibility for them. They have so much information about, like I said, whether we're loving ourselves or abandoning ourselves and about what's going on between us and others or situations. Like you'll be with somebody and you'll get a knot in your stomach. That knot is telling you something. It's telling you something's going on between you and this person that's not so great for you. And so we want to attend to this inner source of guidance.

And loving yourself also means taking responsibility, not only for your feelings, but for who you are in your relationship to others, for your financial situation, for your organization. There's so many levels. For your spiritual connection. So there's so many levels of personal responsibility. Many people do that in those other areas, but not emotionally. And that's what I teach.

**Meagen Gibson - [00:07:34]**

And it's so interesting. You tied so many things together there. And the baby monitor example is such a great one. How many times have we just turned the volume down and then eventually the batteries die? We're so out of tune with our emotions.

And also just the piece that you said about not having models to do that. And for so many generations, we've had the system where our parents or caregivers didn't have enough knowledge about their own emotional state and their own emotions to be self regulated enough to hold space for the younger generation's emotions.

And that's not necessarily, I'm not saying any generation is to blame. That's just perpetually a human condition. And in order to break that cycle you've got to, as you said, start with yourself and very much use inner bonding to be in touch with your emotions so that you can be regulated enough to hold space for somebody else's completely separate sense of self and emotional experience, right?

**Dr. Margaret Paul**

Oh, that's right. And I would hope that parents would learn how to do that before they have children, because obviously a lot of parents don't know how to regulate their feelings. And then when their kids are out of control, they have no idea what to do about that. But if they knew how to regulate their own feelings, it would be very easy for them to help their children regulate their feelings.

**Meagen Gibson**

As a parent, I can say that it's easy to believe that you are in touch with your emotions until you have children. And then you're like, oh, wow. I actually had no idea how much I had going on. And the conclusion I've come to is, I had to do a bunch of work because I needed to get to a place where I could respond instead of react. And I was just blindly reacting to my children's emotional ecosystem instead of responding from a place of regulation. And I'm assuming that's what you're talking about as well.

**Dr. Margaret Paul**

Yeah. There's a really interesting little story about this. When my second child (I've got three kids) when my second child was 2 and a half, I had been yelled at a lot as a kid so of course I thought that was fine. That's the way you parent. And so he was 2 and a half years old and I was yelling at him and he looked up at me with these big eyes and these tears rolling down his cheeks, and he said, "Mommy, when you yell at me like that, I feel like I'm going to die". And I started crying.

**Meagen Gibson**

It's impactful, isn't it?

**Dr. Margaret Paul**

Yes. And I went into the bedroom and I said, I can't ever do that again. I can never do that again. So of course, I had to start to learn another way of managing my feelings because I wasn't going to do that to my kids.

**Meagen Gibson**

And it's not just parent and child relationships that this happens with. I mean, we do this with our partners, we do this in workplaces where we get out of alignment. We're so busy not being attuned to our own emotional reactions and triggers that we're doing that to other people that we interact with. And it's deeply affecting our relationships. And that's all at the core of ignoring your own inner emotions.

## Dr. Margaret Paul - [00:10:50]

Right. One of the things that I teach is that, this is so interesting because, I don't know if you've heard of Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, she wrote a book of insights. So she wrote a new book called *Whole Brain Living*. And she describes these four parts of the brain. And she's a friend so I talked to her about it. And 37 years ago, we labeled these four parts exactly in the way that she now describes them. And it's really helpful in understanding what it means to regulate.

So she calls these parts character one, which is our upper left brain. This is the part that takes action in the world, like the male aspect. And then character two is your lower left brain. This is your ego. This is what we call the wounded self. And this is the part that's fight or flight mechanism, full of false beliefs, full of fear, operates from fear and gets triggered. Like when I was angry at my son I was in here, I was in my lower left brain just reacting. The lower right brain is the soul. It's what we call the inner child. It's our feeling self.

And then the upper right brain, which is so interesting, is more of the feminine aspect. And she said this part naturally can connect with our higher spiritual guidance. But in our left brain society we haven't developed this. So what's happened is that the actions that we take are being informed by our lower left brain, by our ego reactive, fearful, wounded part rather than by our higher knowing and our higher guidance and sense of truth.

And so what happens is that the soul or inner child is left out. And that's what it means to abandon ourselves. Because anytime we're taking action informed by the lower left brain, it is not loving to ourselves. It is controlling. This part just wants to control, wants to control in relationships, get love, avoid pain, be safe. And of course, that's what I said is ruining relationships. And this part of us, this lower left brain, I'm going to describe four major ways that people have learned to abandon themselves. And this is really helpful for people to understand this.

One is, like I said, we stay up in our head so we don't even know we have a feeling. That's a form of self abandonment. Another is we judge ourselves. Almost everybody judges themselves harshly because we were judged a lot when we were growing up. And so there's that voice that says, "Oh my God, you're such a jerk. How could you have said that? You're not lovable. This person is never going to love you because you're not worthy. You're worthless. You're just not good enough". It's on and on with these self judgments. Well, if you were to treat a child that way, of course they would feel abandoned. We do that to ourselves.

And the third part is that we numb out our feelings with so many addictions. There's so many addictions. There's substance addictions, food, alcohol, drugs. Process addictions like television and pornography and social media and video games and on and on and on, being on the phone, on and on. So these are ways of avoiding responsibility for our feelings.

And then the fourth way, which really affects relationships and that's what I was talking about, is we make the other person responsible. That's like, if you have a child, instead of loving that child, you keep trying to give the child away. Here, I don't want to love the child. You have to love the child or the child's not okay. Well, of course, every time we abandon ourselves that way we're telling ourselves we're unworthy, we're rejecting ourselves. And then we wonder why we're afraid of rejection and why we want to control all the time.

So in the inner bonding process, we're developing this access, this right brain access. We're developing the nurturing, loving part of ourselves so that we can bring that love and that truth and that nurturing down inside to our feelings. And then our actions are informed by a source of love and truth, rather than by this young, ego, wounded part of us. And if we look around society, we have only to look at what's happening in our society to see how many people are operating out of the fear and desire to control of that lower part of the brain. That is a lower part of the brain that has no access to any source of truth.

### **Meagen Gibson - [00:15:47]**

And what's coming up for me as you're talking is just I want to acknowledge that part and the part that you're referring to the left, that gets so strong as a means of survival. Because we feel like our very existence, just as your son said, it's not necessarily apples to apples there, but if you feel like you're being threatened and your very survival is at risk, you're going to develop these coping mechanisms in order to, in this particular case, not feel the feelings that feel like if you feel them, you're going to die or some part of you is going to have to die.

Whether that means you're waking up to a codependent relationship you've been in and taking responsibility for your part in that because you were abandoning yourself and not listening to your own feelings. To wake up to that and do something about it means that a part of you that's felt safe, that you've been protecting for a long time, might have to die or might get sacrificed, I suppose.

### **Dr. Margaret Paul**

Well, it's not a matter of dying because this part, this lower part of the brain, is filled with false beliefs. What we want is to heal. If we tell this part of us, this ego part, you're going to die, it's just going to go into huge resistance. I've got to keep on controlling or I'm going to die, because that is survival.

And so what we want to do is we want to learn to operate from a source of truth. You see, and the more we learn to access truth, the more we heal the fear and the false beliefs that we acquired as we were growing up. And that's what healing is. And as you practice the six steps of inner bonding, which I can go through, if you like, we develop this access to a source of truth, and then these false beliefs get healed.

The fight or flight mechanism is natural. It's not going to die. It's not going to go away. But what heals are the false beliefs and the fears that result from that. And so as you practice the process, not only do you develop new neural pathways in your higher brain for being what we call a loving adult, but you develop your access to that higher self, that higher source. So that instead of just listening to these programs, these are programs in your lower left brain, they're programs. "I'm not worthy" is a program. "I'm not good enough" is a program. These are false beliefs.

So as we learn to access our higher guidance, those beliefs get healed, and we find ourselves no longer operating from that. Now we can do what you said. Now instead of reacting, we have the power to respond, to respond in loving ways.

### **Meagen Gibson**

All right, well, you've got my attention. So how does this 6-part healing process work for inner bonding and help to get the false beliefs out and start that connection?

### **Dr. Margaret Paul**

Okay, so now I'm going to go through the steps, but they may sound simple, but they take a lot of practice, like anything worth learning.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, I could give you six steps to ride a bike, but you're not going to go out and ride it efficiently and effectively the first time.

### **Dr. Margaret Paul**

That's right. So the first step is like what I was talking about learning to get from your head to your heart and soul, learning to get in your body so that you're aware of your feelings and that you actually

want responsibility for them instead of wanting to abandon them. So that's the first step that takes practice.

### [00:19:28]

Step two is we focus in our heart and in inner bonding there's only two intentions that we can choose from. One is the intention to protect against pain with various forms of controlling behavior. And that's here in the lower left brain, that's the fear and false beliefs and controlling behavior. And the other intention is to learn about loving yourself and sharing your love with others. So in step two, we make a conscious decision that we actually want to learn about loving ourselves and sharing our love. And then we teach people, it's not very hard, to open to a higher source and access that love and that compassion and that strength and wisdom. We invite that into our heart, simply saying, I invite your love and compassion and strength and wisdom into my heart. And that's what creates the loving adult self. That decision about the intention and inviting that beautiful loving energy in is what creates the loving adult.

Then in step three, see, in step one, let's say in step one you've gone inside your body and you realize you're anxious. So then you do step two, you breathe into your heart. You are open to learning. You invite that loving presence in. Step three, you're inquiring. It's an exploration. And you say to the anxiety, what am I telling you? How am I treating you? What am I doing or not doing right now that's making you anxious? Not about the past. It's so easy to go into the past. Well, I was anxious because my parents this or that. No, it's right now. Because most of us have learned to treat ourselves the ways that we were treated by our parents or caregivers or the ways they treated themselves. And so we're wanting to be in the present and say, what am I doing now? What am I saying now?

And then we go inside. We breathe into, say the anxiety or the depression or the guilt or shame or whatever. We let that part answer from the inner level, and that part might say, well, you're judging me. You're telling me I'm not good enough or you're putting all this pressure on me. You're telling me that I've got to do everything right. I've got to perform. I better not make a mistake. The only way that I'm going to be okay is if this person likes me or that person likes me.

And so there's all kinds of ways that we're creating anxiety that we can find out about by going inside with an intention to learn. It has to be an intention to learn. Like with a kid, if the kid is upset and you say, "Well, what's the matter now?". That child does not feel safe in letting you know. If you say to that child, "Honey, you must have a good reason for being upset, and is there something that I'm doing? Are you upset with me?". That child will feel safe to let you in, and that's what we're doing with ourselves. There must be a good reason I'm feeling this way. There must be something I'm doing.

Well, once we understand that, we go a little deeper into this ego wounded part of us. And let's say that we're telling ourselves we have to be perfect and that's creating anxiety. And you say to that part, well, there must be a good reason that you think we have to be perfect. And that part might say, well, yeah, if we only do everything perfectly, then we can have control over people liking us and accepting us. That's how we can have control over it. Okay, that's a false belief. So there's many of them. There's hundreds of them, but let's just focus on one.

So once you understand what you're doing and what a false belief is or what numerous false beliefs are, then in step four, you open to your higher self and you're asking two questions. What is the truth about this belief and what would be loving to me?

So when I ask, well, what's the truth about whether I have control over other people liking me by being perfect? The answer would obviously be, no, I don't have control over people. They can be perfect all they want, but they don't control how I feel about them. So why would I think that I can control how they feel about me? And so we're going to start to look at what's reality, what's true. And then if I were to say, well, what would be loving to me? The answer might come, take the pressure off. Just relax and take the pressure off and bring some love in to yourself. Just let yourself know that you're okay the way you are, which of course, takes time to really know who you are. And that's part of the process.

**[00:24:23]**

And step five is taking a loving action for ourselves. And step six is going back in to see how I feel as a result of taking that loving action.

Now let me say something about accessing that higher guidance, because people get stymied. They think it's a really hard thing to do. But actually, we're born with this. This is natural. This is what Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor found, that it's a natural part of the right brain to connect. The problem is, is that spirit which we live in, it's all around us. That intelligence, that wisdom, that love is all around us, exists at a higher frequency than we're at. And that's like if we existed at that higher frequency, we wouldn't see each other. We'd be vibrating too fast like a hummingbird's wings to see each other. So we have to vibrate slower so we can see each other.

But in order to access that higher guidance we have to raise our frequency, which takes basically two things to do. One is we have to be open to learning about loving ourselves. It's very specific. When we truly say, I really want to learn what I'm doing that's hurting me, that's abandoning me, and I really want to learn what's loving, that raises our frequency. Whereas if you're just saying, well, how do I control this and how do I control that? That's a low frequency.

And the second has to do with the frequency of our body. And this affects many people today because eating junk food, eating sugar, eating processed food, over processed food, all of that is very hard on the body and it lowers the frequency of the body. So if you really want to have, what I call, at will divine connection, which I have learned to have in my life, then you need to really practice being open to learning about love. And you need to clean up your diet. You need to eat clean food, clean natural food, not all the processed junk food that's out there, which is not only lowering the frequency, it's killing people. 60% of the population live on junk food. And it's no wonder that so many people are ill. And it's also wrecking our planet. You probably know that, that the factory farms and all that are causing huge problems.

So it's not so easy for people to clean up their diet or remember to stay open to learning, but that is what raises the frequency, and that will allow you to have this at will access, which is amazing, because then you don't have to figure things out from your lower mind or even your left brain mind. You can go right to a source of wisdom and find out what is loving to you, what is in your highest good and what's in the highest good of all. And it's an amazing way to live, just amazing.

### **Meagen Gibson**

I imagine it is. And what have you seen as far as the impact on people's relationships once they're able to establish this practice? And also if you could give people a practical expectation, to go back to the bicycle riding example, how long does it take someone to get this process? Because I could see how maybe step one, for someone who's brand new to it, step one might take a while and then step one starts to happen fast, and step two might take a while. So it might not happen one through six right away, immediately. I just asked a bunch of questions all at once.

### **Dr. Margaret Paul**

Well, first of all, it has a huge impact on relationships. Especially if each person is practicing the process. But if even one person is, they're changing the system. Let's say that one person who's been abandoning themselves and caretaking their partner, giving themselves up, trying to do everything for the other person but not paying any attention to themselves, starts to pay attention to what they're feeling and take living care of themselves, the other person may step up to the plate as well.

So it doesn't always happen. There are no guarantees of what's going to happen in a relationship. But if both people, I've been working with relationships for 53 years now and what I've seen over and over, that when both people decide to learn to take responsibility for their own feelings, it actually doesn't take very long for the relationship to start to heal. People start to notice how much better they feel with each other very quickly.

**[00:29:03]**

Now, of course, it's a layering process. When people start to practice inner bonding, they start to feel better right away if they're really doing it. It's the ongoingness of it, it's the remembering to do it. If they're feeling anxious and they take care of that with a six step inner bonding process, they're going to feel better right away. But then the next time they feel anxious, they might not remember to do it. It's not that hard to learn to do. It's hard to remember to do it. But with practice, of course, like I said, you develop the new neural pathways, it becomes easier and easier, and it becomes your natural way of being eventually, with a lot of practice. Like riding a bike or driving a car, they just take practice.

So really, I see results in people who devote themselves to it. I see results very quickly. But what happens with so many people is they practice it, they feel so much better and their relationship is getting better, and then they stop doing it, they think they're done. And I say, no no. It's like being a parent your whole life. This is a lifetime practice. You have to always be taking responsibility for your feelings. You don't just do it here and there and expect it to carry over. Like you don't just spend an hour with a kid and say, okay, I don't have to spend any time with them for the next week.

**Meagen Gibson**

Or workout. And then you're like, well, I worked out. I ran that mile once.

**Dr. Margaret Paul**

And then I'm done. Yeah, right. Or I've been working out for a few months, and now I'm in good shape. And then they stop, and then they wonder why they're not in good shape anymore.

**Meagen Gibson**

It's not something to practice in order to get through a difficulty or a dysfunction. It sounds like it's more of a practice that you develop that you carry with you forever.

**Dr. Margaret Paul**

Oh, yeah. It's a way of being in life. And babies are naturally in touch with their feelings. We learned not to be, which means we can learn to reconnect with ourselves both within, with our feelings and with our higher guidance. We can learn that.

**Meagen Gibson**

I really like that. It sounds wonderful.

So what are some of the signs, both within yourself, in a relationship if we could get really specific, that you might need to do some inner bonding work and get more in touch with your inner world of feelings and emotions?

**Dr. Margaret Paul**

Well, of course, if you're feeling anxious or depressed or angry, you're feeling distant from your partner, you're feeling shut down, you're withdrawn, you're critical, you don't enjoy being together, the passion has gone out, the fun has gone out, you're not laughing, you're not playing together, you're not seeking out each other's company and just really enjoying each other, there's no creativity, there's no newness, it's gotten stagnant, it's dull, it's boring. There are so many ways that we can know that the relationship isn't working, because when two people are really coming together with open hearts, it's fun, it's alive, it's passionate. It doesn't matter how long people have been together. It's the energy between them that gets generated when two people are truly open.



**[00:32:28]**

But with most people, they're not open. They're trying to control. They're trying to get love, and they're not in a position to share love. So, yeah, if you're feeling like, oh, I picked the wrong person, maybe it's time to leave. When I say to people about leaving a relationship, because most people leave way too early, unless there's severe physical abuse, severe emotional, I mean, unless there's any physical abuse or severe emotional abuse, hang in and do your inner work and see what happens when you learn to take responsibility for yourself. It's really quite magical.

So if you're feeling bored with your partner, if you're feeling distant, if there's just no desire to be together and the passion has gone out of your relationship, and you can't sit and talk with each other and you can't resolve conflict, that's a big one. No way to resolve conflict. And so everything gets shoved under the rug and you just get more and more distant. That's what happens when people are not open to learning with themselves and with each other.

**Meagen Gibson**

And conflict is definitely about control.

**Dr. Margaret Paul**

Oh, yeah, it's about control. And so imagine two people are in conflict, but instead of having to win or be right or avoid being wrong or think they have to give themselves up or control it, they come together with a deep desire to learn about themselves and each other, learn about why I feel the way I do, why you feel the way you do, we each have good reasons. Out of that process comes a whole lot of new information about ourselves and about each other. And out of that comes resolution.

It's amazing how easily conflicts get resolved when people have their own highest good and the highest good of their partner at heart and they're open to learning about themselves and each other. I've worked with couples that have had the same conflict for 20 years, 25 years, and then they're open to learning about it and they're just amazed at how easily it gets resolved.

**Meagen Gibson**

It's wonderful. Well, I'm convinced. How can we learn more about this process and your work?

**Dr. Margaret Paul**

Okay, so people can go to [innerbonding.com](https://www.innerbonding.com). There's a tremendous amount of information there. There's a free course, free assessment, there's all kinds of other courses people can take, I have a lot of books. There's many, many ways that people can learn inner bonding.

We also have many facilitators, we have a wonderful facilitator program and people can get help from a facilitator online. We have a community called Inner Bonding Village that people can join and get support there. So there's many ways of learning and practicing inner bonding. I do a weekly podcast and that's very informative for people to really get deeper into inner bonding.

**Meagen Gibson**

Wonderful. Thank you so much for being with me today.

**Dr. Margaret Paul**

You're very welcome.