

# Legacy of Attachment

## A POSITIVE RELATIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Purpose:** To explore the positive, adaptive “relational knowing” that you acquired from your early attachment relationships that contributes to the satisfaction you experience in your relationships today.

**Directions:** Think about positive experiences with a childhood attachment figure (parent, aunt, uncle, grandparent, sibling, teacher, family friend, or peer) and select one to explore. You may also have had unpleasant or negative experiences with the person, but just focus on a positive one for this exercise.



1. Describe your positive relational experience.



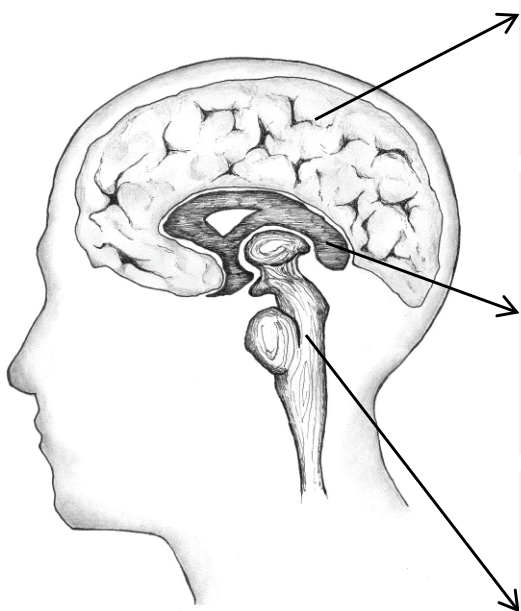
2. Imagine that person is in the room with you right now just as he or she was during the positive experience. Take your time to envision that he or she is with you, maybe sitting beside you or across the room. Reflect on the triune brain model and about how each of your three brains might respond to the positive experience. Describe the thoughts, emotions, and body sensations and movements that come up when you imagine this person in the room with you.



Thoughts/Beliefs:

Emotions:

Body Response: Sensations & Movements:



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### EXPLORING A SOMATIC RESOURCE FROM A POSITIVE RELATIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Purpose:** To draw on a positive relational experience to develop somatic resources that can help you regulate your arousal, mood, and emotions in current dysregulating or challenging relationships.

**Directions:** Explore one of your body responses from the last worksheet, LEGACY OF A POSITIVE RELATIONAL EXPERIENCE and determine how you can turn that response into a resource.

1. Choose a body response that you identified in #2 of the worksheet, LEGACY OF A POSITIVE RELATIONAL EXPERIENCE, that reflects relational knowing.

*My breathing slows and I feel a sense of calm throughout my body.*



2. What relational knowing is reflected by your physical reaction?

*When my grandmother took care of me when I was sick, I felt that I deserved love and that people could depend on one another.*



3. How can you turn this relational knowing into a somatic resource that you can use today?

*"I can remember to breathe more slowly, especially when I am having an argument with my wife I can remind myself that we can depend on each other."*



4. How can you use your somatic resource to regulate the negative effects of remembering upsetting experiences with an attachment figure?

*"When I feel dysregulated when thinking about how my father left us when I was a child, I can remember that my grandmother cared for me, and breathe slowly."*

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## A NEGATIVE RELATIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Purpose:** To explore a negative experience with an early attachment figure that has influenced your relational knowing in a way that limits your fulfillment in your current relationships.

**Directions:** Think about negative experiences with early attachment figures (parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, siblings, teachers, family friends, or peers) and select one to explore. You may also have had pleasant or positive experiences with the person, but just focus on a negative one for this exercise. Note: If you think this exercise could be especially dysregulating, be sure to complete it under the guidance of your therapist, or save it for later.

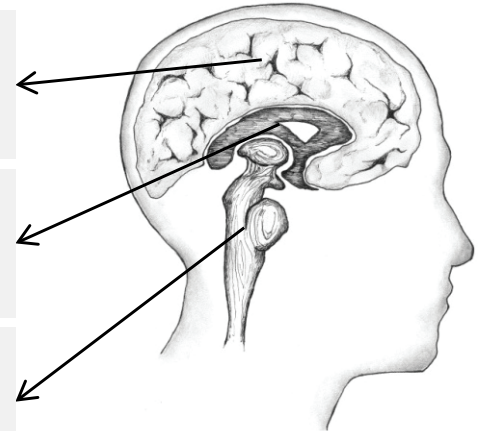
1. Describe a negative experience you had with an early attachment figure.

2. Imagine that person is in the room with you right now as he or she was when the negative experience occurred. Take your time to envision that he or she is with you, maybe sitting near you or across the room. Reflect on the triune brain model and consider how each of your three brains might respond to this negative experience. Write down thoughts that you have, the emotions that come up, and how your body reacts.

Thoughts/Beliefs:

Emotions:

Body Reactions:



4. Describe the relational knowing you received from this individual. What did he or she teach you about relationships?

5. How do you think the relational knowing you learned from this person affects your relationships today?

6. Identify any people in your life today who remind you of this relationship.

7. What body reactions and emotions do you experience with the people you identified in #6 that are similar to those you experienced as a child?


8. What resources can you use to regulate arousal or lessen the effect of this negative relational knowing?

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## THE LEGACY OF ATTACHMENT IN DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIPS

**Purpose:** To identify a current difficult relationship dynamic that evokes implicit memories (i.e., mental, emotional, and physical states) that are similar to those you experienced in an previous attachment relationship.

**Directions:** Think of a difficulty you are having in a current relationship and complete the prompts below.

1. Describe a current relationship in which you experience difficulty in the circle below.	2. Describe the thoughts, emotions, and body responses that come up when you think about this difficulty.
	Thoughts/Beliefs
	Emotions
	Body response
3. Consider similarities between these body responses, emotions, and beliefs and those you experienced in your past. Describe any difficulties in early relationships that feel similar to the current difficulty you described above.	4. Identify three resources you can use to help you separate past from present and regulate your experience in this current difficulty and describe them below.