

## **BIS Psyche & Soul 3**

### **Childhood Foundations of Healthy Relationships 2: Secure Attachments**

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The podcast of this can be found at:

<https://anchor.fm/boscom/episodes/2-3-Psyche--soul---Foundation-of-Healthy-Relationships-Trust-12-egs0te>

This is Jose Parappully, Salesian priest and clinical psychologist at Sumedha Centre, Jeolikote, with another edition of “Psyche & Soul”

This weekend we shall explore another important foundation of healthy relationships– namely, Secure Attachments in childhood.

Let me begin by telling you about Mrs Miranda

Mrs Jessie Miranda is very popular with the teachers and the girls of the college where she is Principal. Parents of students as well as others who interact with her like the way she treats them. She is also a very competent Principal, who has been able to raise the standard of the college considerably since she took over.

Her family finds her a very loving and sensitive wife and mother. Members of her parish have very good opinion of her. She is friendly and actively engaged in parish activities. Young women in the parish often seek her advice with their problems.

When asked what was the secret of her popularity she referred to the good time she had in her own family as a child. She felt her parents really cared for her. Whenever she experienced some distress or was in some need they responded with care and sensitivity.

This kind of sensitive responsiveness on the part of her parents helped the young Jessie to develop self-esteem and self-confidence which helped her to relate to others in a friendly way. She was able to internalize the sensitive responsiveness of her parents toward her and manifest the same to others. Naturally, she grew up to be a very likeable and helpful person.

Jessie’s profile fits that of a child, and later the adult, who experiences what psychologists today agree is a necessary foundation for healthy relationships– namely, secure attachment in childhood. There is a whole school of psychology built on this conviction. It is known as Attachment theory and is one of the cutting edge contemporary psychological theories.

Unlike many other theories in psychology, Attachment theory is based on thousands of hours of direct observation of parent-child interactions, both in the real world and in the laboratory. It is widely regarded as probably the best research-supported theory of emotional development yet available.

Attachment theory underlines the powerful influence parents, particularly the mother, have on the emotional development of children, especially on the development of self-trust and trust of others, so necessary for healthy interpersonal relationships.

Attachment theory presents four types of attachment styles. Secure attachment, two kinds of insecure attachments – ambivalent and avoidant, and a disorganized attachment style.

In the pattern of *secure attachment*, as exemplified in the case of Jessie, the child is confident that its parent (or parent figure) will be *available, responsive, and helpful* when it seeks protection or comfort, or encounters adverse or frightening situations. With this assurance, it feels bold to explore the world. It is such “exploration from a secure base,” as it is called, that leads to development of a sense of competence and self-confidence in the child that enables the child and later the adult to relate in healthy ways to those in its surroundings.

As children we seek some adult to whom to attach ourselves. The more sensitive and responsive this adult is to our needs, the deeper and more secure our attachment and greater the likelihood that we will develop healthy and fulfilling interpersonal relationships.

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Here we can recall the experience of the disciples of Jesus on the sea when the sudden storm arose. They are frightened and feeling very insecure. However, the comforting words of Jesus “Why are you afraid? I am here.” gives them security. Both their inner fears and the storm outside subside.

We all require the calming presence of a sensitive and caring other in our childhood to provide us a sense of safety and security, especially in times of trouble and danger. The secure attachment we develop to this person makes us confident to reach out to others in trust and build satisfying relationships necessary for health and happiness.

You may now want to stay a while quietly with whatever this reflection on foundations of healthy relationships is evoking in you:

- How does Mrs Miranda’s story affect you? Is your experience similar to or different from hers? In what way?
- As a child, did you experience your parents as available, responsive and helpful when you needed them? What memories of such experiences or their opposite come into awareness?
- Stay a while with the feelings these memories evoke in you.

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The Jesus who provided assurance to the disciples during the storm at sea is present to you here and now. You could place all these childhood memories and the feelings they evoke in the hands of Jesus and spend a few moments listening and talking to him.

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Have a pleasant weekend where you feel secure in the closeness of your dear ones and nearness Jesus who walks with you. Bye for now.

Please send your comments, and questions to me at [sumedhacentre@gmail.com](mailto:sumedhacentre@gmail.com)