

Transcript — The Secure Leader: How Attachment Styles Shape Leadership | Part Two

Welcome And Series Context

Jeff Haffner 0:00

Welcome to TCNtalks, and Anatomy of Leadership. This episode is part two of The Secure Leader: How Attachment Styles Shape Leadership. With Jamie Goff. And now, here's Chris Comeaux.

Chris Comeaux 0:19

That's going to lead us to perfectly to our next segment because you talk quite a bit about leadership story. But before we go there to story, you you talked about Michael Scott, but you had another, you had a good avoidant um movie star person. You want to talk about that one for a second? Because that would probably crystallize the insecure avoidant.

Avoidant Leadership Through Miranda Priestly

Jaime Goff 0:36

Yeah, absolutely. So I use Miranda Priestley from the movie The Devil Wears Prada as an example of this. And you know, for those who have watched the movie, or you know, if you haven't watched the movie, there's this the first scene of the movie, right? She she's like a big fashion magazine executive. And the first scene of the movie, she's arriving at her office, and you see all the people who work for her, they look like they are absolutely terrified, right? I mean, they are scrambling to make sure everything is perfect and everything is in its place because if it's not, they know she's going to criticize them. And her reaction to everybody who comes up to her with a question or needing input is like she's rolling her eyes at them. Like, how could you be so stupid? It's kind of the ethos that we really get from her in that clip. And so, and she says several times, like, none of you can do this, right? Like, I can only do this myself. And that's, you know, that's again a very extreme example, but an extreme example of what an insecure avoidant leader might look like.

Chris Comeaux 1:54

You'll laugh at this. So when I worked to my master's leadership, so my mentor was Dr. Stephen Covey's mentor, a gentleman named Dr. Lee Thayer. Um, and he used it in our class, which was actually the Devil Wears Prada, but not as a negative example, but as an

example of a high performance organization. And one of my capstone projects is I took movie clips. But the so this, I don't know if you ever looked at the movie from this angle, but Andy, played by Ann Hathaway, who was the who really received a lot of the stuff you're alluding to, but she went from this very unkind of like nonchalant, it's just a job, to this amazing, high-performing human being who then went went on to live her cause and purpose. And that was the angle of the leadership, which is so funny because he goes, because most people will use the negative aspect, but he pushed us to think in a different way. And I I've I've never been able to look at the devil verse Prada on the negative side before, which was the only way now because I see all these other kind of leadership lessons, but I just thought I'd pay that forward to you.

Jaime Goff 2:53

Well, and I think too, uh, you know, along those lines, like I use that as like that as a um just one piece of it. And so I'm I'm also not considering the entire context of the movie for the purposes of example. Um but there's some other things that happen in the movie where that Miranda character becomes a little bit more vulnerable.

Chris Comeaux 3:15

Yeah.

Jaime Goff 3:15

Right. And I would say that without that, if all she did was what we saw in that very first clip of the movie in the organization was be like that and could never ever let her guard down. I mean, you might have high performance, but this day and age, you'd have a whole lot of turnover. People would not be sticking around for that.

Chris Comeaux 3:37

I have like so many caveats at the beginning of those little it's like this is not about style. This is not about style at all. Right, right, right. There's such a cool uh scene at the very end, if you remember, after Andy kind of goes off on her own and she sees Miranda downtown, and she kind of gives Andy this look, and Andy goes off like typical Miranda, and then Miranda steps back and kind of smiles like, you know, I really helped contribute to her becoming a better version of herself, or at least that was our interpretation of it.

Why Your Leadership Story Matters

Jaime Goff 4:05

Yeah. Yeah.

Chris Comeaux 4:06

Let's go to this next segment because you are so good about leadership story. So you talk about understanding the importance of understanding your leadership story. Why is that self-awareness so important to people maybe starting to rewrite their story? Or, you know, if they had one of the um insecure uh themes, maybe making it moving more. I mean, you said for yourself that maybe you are more insecure, avoidant, but now you score as a secure. So there is hope in this. This is not about putting a label. There is hope.

Jaime Goff 4:39

Yeah. Yes, there is always hope. We always have the ability to change. Otherwise, why even bother writing writing all these books, right? Um, yes, and I I I think it's important for for me, and you know, I am also obviously heavily influenced by, you know, my education and my background. But I just think in order for us to really and truly move ahead and grow, I feel like, again, context, right? Uh, that I mentioned before, being my superpower, I feel like it's so important to understand our context and where we came from. And what are the things that have contributed to the way that we're showing up? You know, why, you know, and I I've I've done that work myself. Like, why was I micromanaging and controlling? Like, where did that come from for me? And uh and how did it create a story that I told myself about other people and their competence or lack thereof? Um, that make me judge people, you know, before having all of the information available to me, like making a lot of assumptions based on those stories I'm telling myself. And, you know, if I don't have understanding of where that comes from for me, then I'm just kind of living according to these scripts that might actually be detrimental to me, you know, as a leader and be detrimental to my team. Um, and so I I just feel like for me, looking back to move ahead is is critical. Um, and that's where you gain that self-awareness. And I always feel like self-awareness is the first step to change.

Chris Comeaux 6:24

So you and you have so many great exercises. By the way, I love um, I I don't know, we are sending you a copy of my book, but when you get it, you'll see you and I are very similar that I wrote mine as a workbook as well. And I went and downloaded your journal. I love that because I love owning my books. And so you wrote a book that you can easily own, but there's so many great exercises where you challenge people to go back into that story, but and that you maybe you would say it differently. I feel like you're also challenging them to rewrite that story. Would that be accurate or how would you say it differently?

Rewriting Meaning With More Balance

Jaime Goff 6:58

Yeah, no, absolutely. And what I mean by rewriting that story is assigning new meaning to the experiences that you've had and learning from them. And that's how we go about rewriting a story. And, you know, I talk a little bit about it in the book. It's it, we're we're rewiring our neural pathways, right? And so no longer, because I've done this work, no longer do I immediately assume incompetence. No longer do I, you know, make assumptions about people's capabilities based on a previous experience that I had with someone who maybe was similar that was negative, right? Because now I realize that I've done that in the past and I'm more conscious of it. And I want to be intentional about getting to know this person in front of me and understanding their capabilities and their strengths instead of making a lot of assumptions about them. So I have kind of rewritten that story for myself. I've thought intentionally about how I want to show up as a leader, what I want to provide to my team, and how I want to see them and give them space to show me who they are. So, you know, that that's really what rew rewriting these stories is about is kind of challenging the assumptions that we've always made about ourselves and other people.

Chris Comeaux 8:26

I have a good friend who get we we went through the same master's program. He was a couple of years after me, and that was part of our master's program is rewriting the interpretation of those stories. And he um he grew up with a very, I'll say a very alpha male dad. Um, you know, if you think of like uh a lot of those stories on the history channel or shows on the history channel, like Swamp People or these mountain men type person. So he grew up with an interpretation that my dad was awfully hard on me. And I've noticed that I because I've been with him and he tells stories now about his dad, and they're such beautiful stories because I could tell he has flipped the script from this, you know, this man was awful to this man was kind of my hero, and he was helping me become a better version of myself and just these amazing stories like being in the swamp and seeing like the eyes of the alligator coming towards them and thinking, I'm gonna die, and now reinterpreting that. And I noticed that I feel like he's telling them because he's helping himself remember them differently. And here's kind of my question to you I forget where I read this, but we're not very accurate in our actual memories. So, and luckily, our brain is very plastic, and so we can rewire those. Is that pretty critical to work that you do that you help people understand? You know, maybe you actually remembered it wrong. That that it's this way that you remembered it may not even be accurate whatsoever. This is not like trying to just put a lipstick on a pig of, well, let's just kind of maybe tell yourself a different version of the story. There's a good chance we never even had the right version. Is that accurate?

Jaime Goff 10:02

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah, absolutely. I think so. And and and I think there's, you know, when it comes to re rewriting our stories, rewiring our brains, you want to do so in a way that's balanced, right? Like you said, you're not putting lipstick on a pig. I mean, for some people, they've had really traumatic experiences in their lives, and that can't be sugarcoated. Um, so there's I also think it's it's more of an integrated, holistic way of looking at our experiences. That, yeah, maybe bad things have happened, you know, in my life or in my relationships. Maybe I've had traumatic experiences, but how can I experience growth from that instead of allowing myself to be controlled by the negative aspects of it and the way that I go about living my life?

Chris Comeaux 11:00

That's really good. Um, I'm actually I'm writing my second book, and it's a lot about what we're talking about here about reinterpreting stories. Um, title of it is It's About Time. And there's uh I go through decade by decade of my life kind of high points and low points, and and then challenge the readers to do similarly. But there's a circumstance that I remember it was in Little League, and I was this incredible little league baseball player. Um, I have a hard or I have a great work ethic. My dad taught me a great work ethic. Well, the very day of the championship game, we had these projects all day long. We were working, and I'm thinking, I'm gonna be exhausted. And that's what I was telling myself. And of course, I was exhausted, performed horribly so bad they binged me. And I remember, like, you know, as a young kid, I mean, we're talking like five years old. People were like, oh wow, you know, get Chris out in the field. And but that day it was like you could tell people were talking, like, oh my God, what happened to him? And that was such a I could literally, I could picture myself in the car with my parents after that game, can even tell you the color of the car, the seat. And so, and there's a script that came out of that that just in the last year of I've been doing some of this own work of like going, oh my gosh. So that was traumatic. I mean, you know, and again, I'm not lessing some people's stories are horrible with the abuse, etc., but that was traumatic. And it's fascinating to me of going, oh my God, that was like five years old, and there's a script from that that has literally impacted me now into my 50s.

Triggers Live In The Body

Jaime Goff 12:23

Yes. Yeah, absolutely. They're so powerful. And you know, those the reason those types of experiences are so powerful is because that we, you know, we experience strong emotion in relationship to them. And so anytime we experience really strong emotion, those are the memories and the stories that really tend to get downloaded into not only our like brain, but into our bodies, right? Um, and so, you know, you can feel your body reacting

in certain ways when you encounter similar situations to that, you know, that type of experience you had.

Chris Comeaux 13:03

So glad you said that. Cause in your book, you do a beautiful job where you challenge your readers, right? To even when they recall some of these memories, to think about where it's manifesting in their to have it right manifesting in their body.

Jaime Goff 13:16

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Because you'll, you know, you'll often because what's happening is that your brain is designed to scan your environment for threat. And so if there's anything in the present that reminds you of a challenging situation or a traumatic experience you had in the past, your brain will automatically interpret that as threat and your body responds accordingly, right? So that's like the fight, the flight, the freeze types of responses. So you can start to feel that in your body. And a lot of times for most of us, we feel it in our body before it makes its way to like the front of our brain where we can identify exactly what's going on. And so kind of becoming attuned to your physiological triggers that let you know that you're under stress or that you're responding in a certain way, um, that awareness can be really helpful.

Secure Leaders Create Safe Haven

Chris Comeaux 14:14

There's a phrase that's coming to me that I heard this incredible speaker many years ago. She called it fast past matching, is what she called what our brain I love that phraseology. It's yeah, yeah. And right, that fast past matching may be 100% inaccurate because it's attributing it to this current situation. And while the brain thinks it's similar patterns, it may not be at all. And then the people that are observing that situation may go, man, the way that person is reacting to the situation is totally out of proportion. But the person is totally unaware that that's actually what's occurring. Well, let's let's kind of move on then. So in the in your book, Secure in your book, The Secure Leader, you argue that leadership is less about what we do and more about who we are, which by the way, that Dr. But Dr. Thayer, my mentor, that's exactly what he said. What changes when leaders stop performing leadership and start leading more from that maybe inner security? Would that be the way to say it?

Jaime Goff 15:08

Mm-hmm. Yeah, yeah, I think so. You know, I think what you see is leaders who I mean, leaders who people want to follow because they are calm and centered and they, you

know, provide what in attachment theory we would call a, you know, a secure base and a safe haven. And so what I mean by that, like the safe haven, these are the leaders who, again, because they're calm, they're secure in who they are, they don't feel threatened, they're open to feedback, they admit their own mistakes. That provides safety, right, to their teams because people look at that and they say, Oh, it's okay if I mess up or make a mistake, because that person's not gonna hate me, they're not gonna immediately fire me or want to engage in criticizing me. They're gonna help me, they're gonna give me feedback, they're gonna talk to me about it, they're gonna help me think through what I've learned or what I could do differently, but I'm not gonna be dehumanized in that situation. And then because that safe haven is there, then those leaders are also providing that secure base from which people can launch, right? We all need a safe base that we can launch from. And that means launching into innovation and trying new things and taking, you know, reasonable, those reasonable risks that can really push both individuals and teams and organizations to grow and flourish.

How Long Change Really Takes

Chris Comeaux 16:41

So you you have two beautiful case studies in your book, one who's insecure, avoidant, one who's insecure, anxious, and you kind of thread it throughout the book. And again, it gives folks hope. Um, so let me think of how I want to ask this question. Is there a typical timeline that you know we live in such a quick fix society? It's so frustrating, right? We drive through for the pharmacy, just want it right away. I imagine people come to you like, Jamie, just fix me. And so what is the journey look like? Is it at least a six-month journey where I and and then maybe the second part of the question is not everyone's a success, right? Because you can't confer a benefit on an unwilling person. I imagine some people show up to you and like my boss told me I had to come to you, Jamie. So here I am, fix me. But they but they they're not, you know, you're gonna do something to them. There's no participation on their part.

Jaime Goff 17:35

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it does absolut that's that's absolutely right. You know, you have to be willing and um motivated to do this type of work. You know, it's not something anyone's gonna, you know, you're not gonna force anyone to do this. Um, it's something that they have to want to do. And when I face as a coach, when I face those that resistance um in people, I try to talk about it in a little bit of a different way in terms of okay, you might not see this in the same way, but let's talk about how this approach that you're taking is hurting you. How is this holding you back? Like what I mean, is this helpful? Like, do you feel like this is really something, these are behaviors and this is an approach that's helping

you and is it serving you well? Because I want to make them see that okay, this might not be something that is help is helping me be successful. Um, and just being really kind of like, let's talk about this honestly. How is this hurting you and holding you back? And what might be the consequences if you continue on this path? Right. Um so because I want them, they have, you know, that person has to be motivated themselves. I can't change them. I do think that, you know, once once people are invested and motivated in making you know these types of changes and really starting to examine themselves, there are some things that um can bring some fairly quick um results. Um, like and the usually where I start with people is like, let's start with your emotional regulation and really digging into that, how well they're regulating themselves emotionally, and then trying to teach them some, you know, fairly simple things that they can do to regulate themselves more effectively. And that can people will start to see if they can do that and they commit to those practices, they'll start to see some changes fairly quickly. But that's just kind of a first order change, if you will. Like that's kind of the first step. But the deeper, second order, kind of more um long-term change takes more time. So I think it's a both and you can see change, quick change, but to maintain it over time, it might take a little longer to do that.

Chris Comeaux 20:04

Some of those emotional exercises. So we have a lot, we actually have several uh certified PQ coaches on our team, Jamie. So positive intelligence, Shiraz Amin. So is it similar to some of those PQ exercises of number one, okay, am I being hijacked in this moment? And if I'm being hijacked, it could be something as simple as rubbing your fingers or just being very aware of your toes or your feet on the ground. Is it is would those be examples, or do you have better ones?

Jaime Goff 20:30

No, yeah. Those are, yeah, those are great examples. And, you know, I talk about some similar um exercises that people can do in the book. And, you know, when I'm coaching people, yeah, it's just it's grounding, taking a few deep breaths. I use security priming, which is like thinking about a person, right? That that really makes you feel grounded and loved. So there are all kinds of like those are like quick things you can do in the moment, and they really do make a difference, but people, you have to do them.

Chris Comeaux 20:59

You have to do it.

Jaime Goff 21:00

You have to practice it, right? Yeah.

Chris Comeaux 21:02

Um, two words that are a lot in the lexicon now is like mindfulness and self-compassion. Um, how does that kind of factor into this journey of becoming a more secure leader?

Jaime Goff 21:14

Yeah. So the mindfulness is absolutely critical, right? Because that's self-awareness, but it's also, you know, talking about emotional intelligence and you know, the the four areas of that, that mindfulness helps you be more self-aware and also helps you be more socially aware, right? Because you notice, you slow down and notice what's happening with me, what's happening in other people, what am I seeing? Um, and you know, being present in the moment instead of letting your brain allowing your brain to hijack you and take you, you know, back into the past and reacting out of that. Um, and then I think with the self-compassion, um it's hard to be you know, to really be compassionate toward other people. We need to first. Be compassionate toward ourselves, right? And recognize that we're all humans on a journey and it's hard. And you know, even for those of us, you know, who are secure most of the time, we still mess up. And so just having that grace for ourselves and then extending that grace to other people as well. Um that's what provides that safety in relationships that we all need.

Chris Comeaux 22:31

Um, especially because again, you worked in healthcare. We have so many generations in the workplace. One of the acronyms is 5G, um that 5G like the Verizon network, 5G because you have five generations in the workplace. Um, so when we look at maybe the millennials and the Gen Z, um, are you hopeful or maybe even more concerned about them? Are they better equipped to be more emotionally intelligent? Or do they have maybe some very unique challenges?

Younger Generations And Tech Boundaries

Jaime Goff 22:56

I mean, I think uh it's a both and, you know, in in some ways. I think every individual human being is equipped for it. Everybody has the capability within them, but it takes practice when it comes to emotional intelligence. It takes practice and awareness and time, right, and intentionality. Um I think that obviously there are some really unique challenges. Like I am when I think about myself and growing up, I am so grateful I didn't have a smartphone, a computer, social media. Like I'm so thankful that that was not even a part of my existence. Um, I think those things present some really unique challenges for our younger generations. What makes me hopeful is that when I'm talking to like my nieces and nephews and young people who are like that Gen Z or even Gen Alpha, uh,

who aren't in the workplace yet, they are they recognize that. A lot of them are recognizing the danger and the negative consequences of being tied to their smartphones, being tied to technology and to social media at all times, and they're withdrawing from it. They're putting boundaries in place, and that makes me so hopeful that it's like they see like this is a problem and it's not serving me well to live my life in this device. So I I feel like because these devices, they're created to keep us emotionally dysregulated, not regulated, and so they're seeing that. I think the other thing that makes me hopeful about younger generations is that they are also more willing to seek help. So even though we're seeing, I think, spikes in like anxiety disorders, mood disorders, those types of things among younger generations, they're also more willing to get help. So they're like they'll go to therapy, they'll seek out counseling, right? They're not ashamed of that. Where I think like you know, boomers and even, you know, Gen X, there's kind of that, you know, I don't want to admit, yeah, there's that stigma and not wanting to admit that you're struggling. So I see that. I I see maybe a little bit more self-awareness, um, willingness to tackle difficult challenges as as opposed to burying their heads in the sand. So I so I think there are some things that are there, they're hopeful. Um

Chris Comeaux 25:30

well, Jamie, you're a treasurer. I'm so glad that I got to meet you. What final thoughts do you have you'd like to share with our listeners?

Jaime Goff 25:36

Yeah, I think just what we've been talking about that no one and I just want to reiterate what we mentioned earlier. Even if you more strongly identify with an insecure style right now, that doesn't mean you're stuck there. Um, we all have the ability to to change, to become more secure, to live more fulfilling lives, and to have deeply meaningful relationships, both in our personal and professional worlds. And so I would just encourage people um with that hope and that there are things that you can do um to start on that journey. Um, so you know, seek out a good book, uh, seek out a coach or a therapist uh if that's what you need. Um, and create a better life, write it, write a better story for yourself.

Chris Comeaux 26:31

That's beautiful. Well, Jamie, we're gonna include a link to your book, any other links that you want to share. I'm so glad. I'm sure Christas was blessed to have you, I'm sure, but I'm glad that you decided to take your gift to the broader world. I think the timing of this is pretty incredible. Um, I mean, we we see such a need for this in the work that we do. We work with many, many organizations. We get calls literally weekly where people are calling us to say, hey, we need some work with one of our leaders within our organization. So thank you for the work that you're doing.

Final Thoughts And Brain Bookmark

Jaime Goff 27:01

Yeah, thank you, Chris. Thanks for having me.

Chris Comeaux 27:03

Well, entire listeners, we want to thank you. At the end of each episode, we always share a quote, a visual. The idea is to create a brain bookmark, a thought prodder about our podcast subject, just to further your learning and your growth and thereby your leadership. What we're going for is like a brain tattoo. We want it to stick. Be sure to subscribe to our channel. We don't want you to miss an episode. If you want to check out Jamie's book, again, we're gonna have a link, also a link to my book, The Anatomy of Leadership. You know, it's easy for us to rail against the world and be frustrated by things. Let's be the change that we wish to see in the world. So thanks for listening to our today's show. And here's our brain bookmark to close it.

Brain Bookmark / Jeff Haffner 27:39

To become a secure leader, you have to be willing to do the inner work.

USI Sponsor / Jeff Haffner 28:00

Thank you USI for sponsoring this episode.