**The Building Blocks of Love:**

**Co-Creating a Happy Relationship**

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**Part 1**

***Most of us are somewhat confused about love.*** We yearn for love, and we need love.  But what does healthy love look like? And how can we create it?

Our confusion leads to all sorts of unconscious and irrational behavior, uncomfortable feelings, and reactivity in our relationships. It can impact our ability to make or keep commitments. It can result in anxiety or withdrawal, even abandonment and betrayal. Confusion about love creates a lot of unhappiness.

What we yearn for is something very particular. It’s often missing in our closest relationships. We’ve wanted this simple feeling since we were born: it’s the feeling of secure, dependable love.

Deep inside, you know how love *ought* *to* *feel*. Infants innately know what love feels like: an upset baby gets picked up, held close to her mother’s or father’s body, and soothed with gentle touch, a soft voice, and eyes that are warm and caring. We have a neurological need to be comforted in this safe and tender way. To the infant, this feeling ***is*** love.

When children get this kind of safety and predictable care, they form a secure attachment bond with their primary caregiver. When they don’t, they develop what the psychological literature calls “adverse developmental effects.”

This field of research, called *attachment theory*, grew out of hundreds of studies beginning in the 1950’s with pioneers such as John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth, and many others. In the past decade, the field has been popularized and brought into practical application by Sue Johnson (*Hold Me Tight*), Stan Tatkin (*Wired for Love*),Dan Siegel (Parenting from the Inside Out) as well as other clinical psychologists. These researchers have shown how our childhood bonding pattern extends into, and shapes, our adult relationships.

What has become clear, through decades of research on attachment in both children and adults, is that we never outgrow this need to feel safe and secure in our relationships. We are designed to be deeply connected to someone we trust. All of us, whether infant, child, or adult, want to have our needs and feelings heard, and cared for, by someone who makes us a priority.

**In the next segment: The amygdalae, danger detection, and the *LoveStyle***