# How You Learned to Love

YOUR ATTACHMENT BLUEPRINT

> *Before you ever chose a partner,*
> *someone taught your heart what to expect.*

Nobody arrives at love empty-handed. Long before this relationship, back in childhood, you ran a thousand experiments. What happens when I cry? When I need something? When I reach? The answers (someone comes; sometimes someone comes; nobody comes; or worse, someone comes angry) got written into your nervous system as a blueprint. This is what love is, and this is what I have to do to keep it.

The strategies you built were smart. The kid whose reaching got unpredictable answers learned to reach louder and hold tighter. Love as vigilance. The kid whose needs were a burden learned to need less, achieve more, and handle everything alone. Love as self-sufficiency. The kid who had to earn warmth learned to perform, please, and watch for displeasure. Love as a job with no days off. Every strategy was the best possible answer to the home it was invented in.

The trouble is that blueprints outlast the houses they were drawn for. You walked into this relationship carrying instructions written for a different home decades ago, and so did your partner. Half of your cycle is two old blueprints arguing with each other in the dark. The freedom in this is that what was learned can be updated. Not by willpower, but by new experience. By reaching in this house and discovering, over and over, that this time someone comes.

### READ THE BLUEPRINT OUT LOUD

1. On your own, finish these: “When I was upset as a child, I could count on ___.” “What I learned to do with my needs was ___.”
2. Name your strategy in one kind phrase. The Vigilant One. The Self-Contained One. The Earner.
3. Tell each other the story of how your strategy was born, with the compassion you would give any child.
4. Then connect it forward: “In our cycle, my blueprint shows up when I ___.”
5. Close with something like this, in your own words: “You're not the house I learned this in. Help me learn yours.”

### WHEN IT’S HARD

If your childhood holds real harm, this reflection can open more than a handout should hold. Bring it into session, where it belongs and where it can heal. And if you remember mostly a “fine” childhood with no big wounds, look for the quiet lessons. What was never talked about teaches as much as what happened.

### TO SIT WITH

*Which of your partner's “flaws” might actually be a child's smart strategy, still running?*

*What new answer has this relationship already given your oldest question? Have you let it count?*

### OUR INTENTION THIS WEEK

Something small you can both actually do this week.

WITH YOU ON THE JOURNEY,

*Dr. Mark Gregory Karris*