



Meri Levy, LMFT
Body Wise Parent
BodyWiseParent.Substack.com

The HEARTS Framework for Relational Security

from Polysecure by Jessica Fern, LMFT

HEARTS for Your Relationship with a Partner

Jessica Fern developed the HEARTS framework as a guide for how partners can show up for each other in ways that build secure attachment. Each letter names a relational practice: a way of being with another person that helps them feel safe, seen, and loved.

H Here

Being here means offering your full, embodied presence. Not just physically in the room, but emotionally available. It means putting down distractions and turning toward your partner with genuine attention. Presence communicates: you matter enough for me to actually show up.

E Expressed Delight

Your partner needs to know that you not only love them but like them, that your face lights up when they walk in, that you enjoy who they are. Expressed delight is the visible, felt sense of being cherished and welcome. It communicates: I am glad you exist.

A Attunement

Attunement is the capacity to tune into your partner's inner world: to notice what they are feeling and reflect it back accurately. It requires curiosity rather than assumption, and the willingness to be moved by what moves them. Attunement communicates: I see what is happening inside you.

R Rituals and Routines

Predictable patterns of connection — morning greetings, bedtime check-ins, kisses goodbye, weekly dates, small daily rituals — create the felt sense of reliability. Secure attachment is built not only in big moments but in the ordinary consistency of showing up again and again. Rituals communicate: you can count on me.

T Turning Toward in Conflict

How partners navigate rupture matters enormously. Turning toward each other in conflict means staying in relationship even when it is hard: repairing after disconnection, taking responsibility, and choosing connection over being right. This communicates: our bond is more important than winning.

S Safe Haven and Secure Base

A secure partner is both a safe haven and a secure base. As a safe haven, they offer comfort and co-regulation when you are distressed. As a secure base, they support your exploration, growth, and autonomy. Together, these two functions communicate: you are safe to rest here, and safe to fly.

HEARTS for Your Relationship with Yourself

Fern extends the HEARTS framework inward, recognizing that secure self-attachment, the capacity to be a reliable, caring presence to oneself, is foundational to healthy relationships with others. Each practice maps to a way of turning toward yourself with the same care you would offer a dear partner.

H Here

Being here with yourself means inhabiting your own body and inner experience rather than fleeing into distraction, busyness, or dissociation. It is the practice of regularly noticing what you are experiencing and being present with yourself.

E Expressed Delight

Self-delight is the capacity to appreciate, celebrate, and enjoy who you are. It means noticing your strengths, your humor, your beauty, your efforts. It counters the internalized voice of criticism. Expressed self-delight revels in your strengths and accomplishments rather than focusing on your flaws.

A Attunement

Self-attunement means validating your emotional states, needs, and sensations rather than overriding or dismissing them. It is the practice of asking: what am I actually feeling? What do I need right now? And responding with curiosity and compassion rather than judgment.

R Rituals and Routines

Reliable self-care practices, including sleep, movement, nourishment, rest, play, creativity, and solitude, create the felt sense of being taken care of from within. Consistent routines build inner security because they tell the nervous system: someone is looking after you, and that someone is you.

T Turning Toward in Conflict

Turning toward yourself in difficulty means staying with the hard feelings rather than abandoning yourself through self-criticism, numbing, or denial. It means being willing to sit with discomfort, repair your relationship with yourself after you have acted against your values, and offering yourself the same compassion you would offer a friend.

S Safe Haven and Secure Base

Becoming your own safe haven means being able to soothe, regulate, and comfort yourself in distress. This means developing the inner resources to acknowledge dysregulation and learn to self-soothe. Becoming your own secure base means trusting yourself to take risks, make mistakes, and pursue growth without requiring external validation, to not abandon yourself by prioritizing others over your own needs, to advocate for yourself in the world, and to protect yourself by setting necessary boundaries.

For the full framework, see the book *Polysecure* by Jessica Fern (2020).