

00:00.00

theautismhelper

Hi Katie thank you so much for joining me.

00:02.20

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Hi. Thanks so much for having me as well.

00:07.19

theautismhelper

Um I was just telling Katie before we started that I really love her Instagram that's how I found her and she shares all of so much great information and explains things about aba in a really understandable way. So everyone has to check it out. What's your Instagram handle.

00:22.75

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Um, it is doctor Behavior boss.

00:26.79

theautismhelper

Love it. Ah when we were deciding what to talk about I saw a post that Katie had shared a few weeks ago about attachment styles explained in behavior analytic terms and I thought it was so interesting and so I'd love to kind of chat about that today. Do you want to start us off.

00:39.72

Dr\_ Katie Saint

That.

00:43.41

theautismhelper

Explaining what are the 4 styles of attachment.

00:46.90

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Absolutely So We have a secure attachment style which if you come from healthy background and you have healthy conditioning with. Opening up and getting your needs met emotionally and physically typically people develop a secure attachment but when you grow up in a home where your emotional needs are met inconsistently and. You're faced with some rejection in your communication. Sometimes you can develop anxious attachments avoidant attachments or insecure attachments. So There's 4 different styles and it kind of depends on your conditioning. What got reinforced. What didn't. As to kind of where you end up in how you relate to relationships.

01:43.74

theautismhelper

Do you think knowing or having a rough idea of what type of attachment

style. Someone has could help on what strategies or supports you give them.

01:52.73

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Absolutely depending on a person's attachment style different things are going to Trigger Escape Behavior and so if you know say for example. And Avoidant attachment style typically is going to engage in Escape Behavior when it comes to emotional topics so opening up and having those vulnerable conversations are super hard for somebody with an avoidant attachment style. So if you know this about them. You know to proceed with caution. You know you're going to have to go the extra mile to pair yourself with reinforcement to make that environment feel safe. So You're not triggering that Escape behavior.

02:42.33

theautismhelper

That's a great example I Even think of in the classroom like that would be good to know about ah a child as well and how you approach them and what things you want to do So it's kind of interesting to think about everything like that.

02:52.60

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Absolutely I think a lot of people when they think of Aba and Escape Behavior or things like that. We only think about Autism or kids but it applies to all of us and it massively shapes how we interact with each other.

03:10.55

theautismhelper

Yeah, so let's go through each of these attachment styles and kind of break down what it looks like behavior analytically and then maybe what supports we could give kind of how you just did. Um, let's start off with that anxious attachment style. What what does that look like from that. Individuals like history of learning.

03:25.36

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Absolutely So an anxious attachment is going to have frequent patterns of pursuing the relationship and then pulling away so there's going to be this push pull that happens they're going to struggle to be in the moment. Um, because inside their head. They're going to be predicting rejection. They're going to be anxious about things and so really enjoying the moment is going to be difficult for them. So to compensate for the unpleasant internal events that they're experiencing the anxiety things like that a lot of times people with anxious attachments seek to control. They might criticize more often. They might be a little bit Needy. So There's going to be this push pull of criticism and then please don't leave me those sort of

Behavior patterns and a lot of times that comes from growing up. They had love inconsistently so they kind of. Had to work for it and then it was taken away and it was unpredictable. So There's that conditioning there that love is not going to be Consistent. It's not something you can really rely on so as adults they will try to compensate for that and they will.

04:53.16

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Pursue reducing that rejection by overcompensating in those ways.

04:59.18

theautismhelper

That totally makes sense and you could also picture you know kids that are currently in that situation with are probably engaging in a lot of quote unquote problem behaviors in the classroom too.

05:10.55

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Absolutely and a lot of those kids in their homes. They've learned that problem Behavior is the most consistent way to get attention if if their behavior is extreme enough. You can't ignore it.

05:22.57

theautismhelper

Um.

05:27.24

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Versus when they're well-behaved when they're communicating. Respectfully they're reinforcement from their parents as far as what kind of attention they get from them is probably pretty inconsistent so it's easy to think from a behavior Pattern standpoint of how those problem behaviors. Get reinforced more frequent than the good behaviors.

05:49.97

theautismhelper

Yeah, and what can teachers and clinicians in that scenario like I'm picturing you know former clients and students that I'm like you just explained to them. Um, what what kind of supports can they add into the environment for them to be successful.

06:03.38

Dr\_ Katie Saint

The biggest thing with someone who doesn't have a secure attachment is creating a consistent Environment. So the more consistent and predictable. Your environment is the easier to. The easier. It will be for someone to be successful if they have that inconsistent background So A lot of times we're inconsistent due to Compassion. We make

exceptions for people. We feel bad given the circumstances. But that's actually not very helpful to someone with high anxiety or you know an attachment style. That's not Secure. So if we can make the environment consistent and predictable. That creates this sense of security like I know what to expect I know what's going to happen I don't have to test this environment anymore and typically they're going to be a lot more successful then.

07:02.33

theautismhelper

That's kind of interesting that idea on like we make exceptions with compassion. Can you kind of elaborate on that a little bit more.

07:06.66

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Absolutely so often people and tend to be consistent with rules and different boundaries. But then they see the anxiety of a child or they see how badly the child wants it and they just want to make that child happen. And they just want to give in to that and so it's not coming from a bad place at all. But they feel like ok, you know if I say yes this time It's not a big deal. The kid is happy because they got what they wanted but then the problem comes in in that they don't say yes. Every time So Sometimes it's a yes sometimes it's a no and sometimes the excuses are powerful enough Sometimes they're not so it just creates this inconsistent environment where then the child doesn't know what truly earns. Yeses and what truly earns those privileges so it leaves them guessing.

08:09.20

theautismhelper

Oh yeah, and I feel like sometimes reinforces the like pushing of the boundary you know like if I keep asking I might get a yes yeah that totally makes sense. Um, but and it it's I like that phrase like you know we do with compassion because we are. We're doing it to be nice and like.

08:14.80

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Oh absolutely.

08:26.99

theautismhelper

We see the struggle there but those boundaries are inconsistency are there for a reason all right? So that.

08:30.87

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Right? Yeah and a lot of times people feel mean when they keep boundaries and they they feel like a jerk saying no you know? So I think that's part of why it can be hard to be consistent sometimes as

well like we feel bad about ourselves then.

08:47.25

theautismhelper

Yeah I mean totally I like this all makes a lot of sense so that was kind of anxious that anxious style of attachment. How is anxious different than avoidant how are those 2 a little bit different.

08:59.53

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Sure So Avoid an attachment is going to be the type of child. That's a little bit harder to connect with. So if you have a child with anxious attachment. They're gonna pursue you a little bit more like I said earlier, there's that. Push and pull to the relationship where avoidant attachment their conditioning has taught them that relationships aren't really safe and so they're going to avoid connection and so. These kids need a little extra love from the perspective of it's not as easy to connect with them. Um, they're not pursuing Affection. They're not pursuing connection as much as kids insecure and anxious attachments. Um, so you're going to see them um have an attitude more. You know you're going To. You're going to see those defense mechanisms up where they're going to say things like I don't care or doesn't bother me. Um, you know they're not going to.

10:07.20

theautismhelper

Um.

10:08.73

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Want to open up and have vulnerable conversations. So you're you're just going to see a lot of walls put up with a child who has a avoidant attachments.

10:21.76

theautismhelper

And then what type of approaches would be helpful in that scenario with a child or an adult that has that kind of Avoidant um attachment style.

10:28.84

Dr\_ Katie Saint

The biggest thing with someone who has avoided attachment styles is not coming on too strong kind of building up creating that safe relationship and then just touching on a subject and then coming back to it. You know, kind of like dipping your toes in the water talking about it briefly and then taking a break from it and coming back if you don't come on super strong and if you continue to make that environment feel safe. They're less likely to withdraw and put up their defense Mechanisms. So with any sort of attachment style. That's

not secure whatever you can do to make them feel safe is going to help and with the avoidant attachment style. The biggest way to make them engage in Escape Behavior. Is if you come on too strong So That's where slowly easing into things making it as safe as possible. Um, creating small doses of it rather than forcing hour long conversations things like that.

11:25.90  
theautismhelper  
Are the.

11:43.70  
Dr\_ Katie Saint  
Can help overcome some of those defense mechanisms.

11:45.99  
theautismhelper  
Kind of interesting to think about like what makes each individual feel safe is going to be a little bit different right? So that who go ahead.

11:52.29  
Dr\_ Katie Saint  
Absolutely and I think 1 thing to kind of consider with the avoidant attachment style as far as what makes them feel safe and avoidant attachment style the less personal. Vulnerable questions. You're asking the better you know because when you're making them feel vulnerable that feels super unsafe to them where if you have somebody with an anxious attachment style. That's actually okay if it's a safe environment and you're.

12:19.55  
theautismhelper  
Um, who.

12:27.91  
Dr\_ Katie Saint  
Trying to get them to open up that that actually might not trigger them at all so just kind of recognizing that that what triggers escape for one could be the opposite for the other.

12:41.25  
theautismhelper  
Yeah, that's true. That's not 1 you know as as the world is. There's not 1 blanket strategy based on everyone's learning history. That's going to be successful.

12:50.14  
Dr\_ Katie Saint  
Rain exactly.

12:53.81

theautismhelper

So we went over secure and avoidance. So the last one is or we went over anxious and avoid it and the last one is disorganized. What is how does that one a little bit different than the other 2

13:03.99

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Sure So this one is going to be the most extreme attachment um disorder and so you're going to see ah um, a high. Frequency of Rejection behavior. Um, Avoidant behavior where they are um, escaping they are predicting rejection. Um, you might see um people in this category. Ah, using people taking advantage of their peers or relationships or they might swing to the other extreme of being extremely enabling Um, very passive. And just having no voice at all standing up for themselves. Um, so we tend to see both ends of the spectrum with the unhealthy extremes of a relationship. Um, so when we're looking at this attachment Style. Um. It takes a lot to make them feel so secure it takes a lot to get them to trust relationships because they have a very strong history often abuse in their background leading them to believe that relationships are not safe.

14:27.99

Dr\_ Katie Saint

And pretty consistently in their learning history people who they were supposed to trust actually caused them a lot of harm.

14:35.40

theautismhelper

Oh that's really yeah, thinking about a lot of our kids that have such a you know strong history of trauma probably I would assume in this type of attachment style. So I mean this is like maybe the million dollar question then how do we because there can be kind of so many differences in this.

14:43.55

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Exactly yes.

14:54.17

theautismhelper

In this group. What are some starting off strategies. Obviously it's going to be individualized to the student and the child. But where do we start off with these with these kids.

15:01.35

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Well 1 thing that works with every attachment style is the consistency but this is even more important for this group because their anxiety

is so high because their distrust is so high. Having a predictable environment is going to be critical if we want to earn their trust. We can't leave them guessing on what to expect and so proactively thinking about what are the expectations that I want to have what are the rules that I'm going to stick to. And really making a plan in advance so that you can be consistent and so that the battles you're picking are worth it. It is really going to help and I think too with this attachment style really tying things back to their values is going to be really important. So if you're placing a demand or asking them to do something non-preferred really explaining how it benefits them how it connects to something they care about is going to be really important a lot of times this category of people have. Such a high distrust and so if you tell them to do something. They don't want to do it could be very hard to motivate them. So if you're coming less as an authority figure and you're coming more as a partner like hey you know what I know this isn't super fun to do.

16:34.93

Dr\_ Katie Saint

But this benefits you in this way and it'll make your life easier because X Y Z and so if if we do that then you know you'll get that benefit and then we can get to the stuff that you want to do right away after that. You know so you want to just tie it in like that so that they can see this is about them. This is about helping them benefiting them rather than just some random nonpreferred tests that I have no desire to do.

17:02.89

theautismhelper

Yeah, that's great advice and you could definitely see how that could play out positively in a like classroom or therapy session.

17:13.39

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Absolutely ah, a lot of times. There's that missing piece where we forget to explain the why even kids without attachment struggles explaining. And why can really reduce that escape behavior because who wants to do something for no reason right? So taking that extra 5 seconds to explain how it benefits them can really help.

17:31.51

theautismhelper

Um, yeah, um.

17:42.16

theautismhelper

Um, yeah I love this kind of overall concept of looking at something That's maybe more of a traditional psychology framework but taking that behavior analytic perspective.



17:52.79

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Absolutely,, That's part of what I love about Behavior analysis. It truly explains every behavior we do you know when we look at our learning histories The way we talk how we interact with people. All of that has been shaped by patterns of reinforcement and punishment with other interactions with people you know so when we really sit down and analyze our learning Histories What we do makes sense and so I love the quote about.

18:23.20

theautismhelper

Um, yeah.

18:28.23

Dr\_ Katie Saint

You you would never judge somebody if you knew their MOs and so and mo is an aba term for motivating operation meaning like if you understood their motivation and the contingencies that they were faced with and their learning history. Their behavior would make complete sense.

18:30.86

theautismhelper

Are.

18:47.82

Dr\_ Katie Saint

You know? and and I just think that's so true.

18:48.50

theautismhelper

Um, yes and I feel like this is maybe a direction like our field needs to go more and more into on not being so stuck in and maybe where we were twenty years ago and and being open minded on. Collaborating and working within other you know another framework and hey this is the way we view it in in our in our way. Um, but really being a more collaborative field on and like an idea like this.

19:13.78

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Absolutely I think Behavior analysts are trained so heavily not to be mentalistic and you know to think about things so behaviorally that sometimes I Think. We were afraid to branch out like it. We can't talk about psychology because that might have a mentalistic theory or you know different things like that. But when when you really dive into it Psychology and ABA are completely compatible and they explain a lot of things.

19:38.17

theautismhelper

Are there.

19:49.44

theautismhelper

Um, yeah.

19:50.11

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Together You know when we we look at Psychology diagnosis is mental. Health diagnosis is really, they're just a list of symptoms that we observe behaviorally you know and then when we look at people's learning Histories they're conditioning a lot. Ah times like sometimes it's genetic and things like that too. But a lot of times their learning history shaped those behaviors and so we can work together with psychology to to help people overcome a lot of that.

20:22.71

theautismhelper

I Think it makes I think it makes the field of Aba so much more open because I think you know sometimes people have a hard time with that. Well what about internal events and what about has this explain this. But if we can you know think more critically. And apply it just like you did here I think more people would be on board of it too.

20:42.41

Dr\_ Katie Saint

I agree I agree I think a lot of people also use too much terminology which I I can be guilty of it too. Um, but I think that scares people away as well when we're not using everyday language and and things like that to explain.

20:58.90

theautismhelper

Yeah, exactly I know if you're like afraid to excellent use. The wrong word I felt like as a young behavioral Analyst I was like oh my gosh I can't say the wrong thing but and then that is limiting right? That's punishing my behavior of even disgusting and sharing aba.

20:59.17

Dr\_ Katie Saint

What's happening too.

21:13.29

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Right? exactly.

21:17.00

theautismhelper

So what kind of prompted you to start your Instagram and kind of share your ideas.

21:21.85

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Well actually I had this coworker her name is Jess and she's just a real sweetheart of a person who's good at just encouraging people and you know being a cheerleader for folks. Um, and so she encouraged me to start an Instagram just to. Kind of share this type of thing that aba is not just for autism and aba applies to all areas of life and and so I went ahead and I started it and it was actually really cool for me. To meet just the number of people in our field who have been craving this and have not had an outlet for it or who have attempted to kind of talk about how aba applies to more than just autism and more than just kids but they have not been met with. With friendliness in their attempt to do that. So it's just been cool for me to kind of meet people who also share this passion and spreading aba I truly believe that if aba could be accepted more generally that we could help.

22:19.19

theautismhelper

Um.

22:34.76

Dr\_ Katie Saint

A lot of really challenging situations even just doctors for example, like they are asking people to go home and do all these challenging behavior changes to help people get well and a lot of times people struggle to make those changes. Or counselors The same thing they have 45 minute sessions and they're counting on that client to take what they learned in that session and and change their behavior outside of the session and then come back and tell us how it went you know so I think. If there's more collaboration and more people who understand how ABA principles apply to all behavior I Just think the impact would be so huge.

23:20.24

theautismhelper

Yes I know it's It's so and the word crave is right because I feel like that's where I am I'm like we need more of this. You know it's we've I'm sure every behavior Analyst listening has you know, walked into a meeting or whatever and like I'm a bcba. Oh you're for the child with Autism or you're for reducing negative behavior and it's like ha.

23:39.40

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Right? right? It's bigger than that.

23:39.92

theautismhelper

Not just that. Ah yeah, well thank you so much for joining me Katie so um, your Instagram again is doctor behavior boss right? Um, so everyone should give her a follow because you're you're sharing things in a really great way and and very.

23:51.12

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Yep, that's correct.

23:59.75

theautismhelper

And thinking very critically about things. It's not just like throwing up a meme that's like about elotement that's funny. It's it's really digging a little deeper on and why we do what we do and and applying these principles to everyday situations. So I think it's. Really really helping you know, explain our field to other people and hopefully getting more people excited about it. Also.

24:18.62

Dr\_ Katie Saint

Awesome! Well thank you so much that makes me feel really good. You bet. Thank you.

24:24.49

theautismhelper

Um, all right thanks for joining Katie.