Brain and shame / we are all in recovery.
Understanding what's broken in self-destructive people is essential to effective recovery. Our ability to bond trust that attach is what is broken, so the challenge is how to come up with effective treatment to heal these destructive self-messages from the preverbal period in our life. What works is an effective partnership between God and people. Remember, recovery is to return to a former health state. Negative and positive self-worth messages from the beginning of our life will dictate who we are and how we behave—for good or bad—until they are changed. There are some excerpts from some of the experts in the field about early attachment and their conclusions.

It's a more nuanced view of the nature vs. nurture debate. Not only is it nature and nurture, as most of us already believe; an individual's particular genetic makeup (nature) also continues to evolve during the first two years of life under the influence of the environment (nurture). In other words, what happens to you, emotionally and psychologically, during those first two years, and especially in the first nine months of life, will powerfully influence your neurobiological development, determining how your brain takes shape in lasting ways. Most important among the brain parts that develop during these early months are those that involve the "emotional and social functioning of the child." And if those parts of the brain are to develop appropriately, "certain experiences are needed. Those experiences are embedded in the relationship between the caretaker and the infant." A deeply sobering thought. You can call it what you like—bad parenting, failure of attunement, insecure attachment—but when things go wrong between parent and child in the first two years of life, you are permanently damaged by it in ways that cannot be entirely erased. The awareness that you are damaged, the felt knowledge that you didn't get what you needed and that as a result, your emotional development has been warped and stunted in profound ways—this is what I refer to as basic shame. The concept lies at the heart of the work I do.

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=allan+schore+neurobiology+of+secure+attachment

Two other lecturers in this video link the experience of secure attachment during this critical period to the development of both a fundamental sense of self-esteem and the ability to feel empathy for others. The relationship to shame and narcissistic defenses against it is implicit. Either you get what you need from your caretakers during those early months and your brain develops in such a way that you have a fundamental self-confidence and security in the world; or you don't get what you need and the residue—the neurological damage—is basic shame. Either your caretakers are emotionally attuned to you and you develop (neurologically) the capacity to empathize with other people; or those caretakers let you down and as a result, your constant struggle for a sense of your own worth and importance powerfully limits your ability to empathize with other people.

Near the end of the video, Schore stresses the importance of joy in the attachment experience—that is, the infant's attunement with its mother in the experience of her joy and interest in her baby is crucial for optimal development. If you don't have that experience, if you don't feel that your mother experiences joy in your presence and finds you beautiful—it will permanently damage your brain as it develops. In an earlier post on my website, After Psychotherapy, I wrote that the baby whose mother doesn't adore it (or feel profound joy and interest in her baby) "never gets over it, not really." Now I can say why: it's because the neurological development of its brain was permanently altered by the failure to get what was needed during the first year of life.
The Insecurely Attached Child
Children who do not develop secure attachment during early childhood are most often found to have social difficulties throughout the rest of their development and up into early adulthood. Dr. William Sears, MD, who some claim to be the man most responsible for the development of Attachment Parenting (a way of parenting geared toward fostering secure attachment in children), reports a number of characteristics often observed in insecurely attached children as they grow:
- Misbehavior/receive constant reprimands (school & home)
- Constant dissociation or ‘tuning out’
- Aggressive and/or manipulative behavior towards others
- Bullying or easily bullied
- Defensive response to authority figures (teachers, parents, etc.)
- Unwilling to share
- Shunned by peers
- Shallow later friendships
- Less curious or more hesitant to learn
- Difficulties with empathy
- Distrust of adults leading to not asking for help when needed
- Low Self-Confidence
- Difficulties regulating emotions (example: calming self down when upset)

Dr. Sears’ research also found that insecurely attached adults were morally immature, still having difficulty understanding the concepts of ‘right’ and ‘wrong.’ There were also links found between severe levels of insecure attachment and later addictive tendencies as well as violence and sociopathic behaviors (Sears).