



## **Healthy Secure Attachment Relationship Inventory / Attachment History**

### **Attachment Styles in Relationships**

Attachment theory states and explains that our biological need is to attach or bond with others, starting with our earliest relationships. Our early experiences form an instrumental blueprint that is stored in the body memory and becomes part of our basic relational wiring, our sense of safety and security. Some individuals are fundamentally secure in their relationships, while others are insecure. Insecurity can lead couples to remain distant from their partner or to harbor ambivalence about relating. Insecurely attached partners often need to rewire their brains out of the dysfunctional tendency acquired early in our life. Building a sense of self-esteem and self-worth is one way to accomplish this task.

Self-esteem and self-worth are developed through our contact with other people. That's how it works and that's how it has always worked, starting from infancy. For example, during your childhood, you may have experienced a great deal of chaos and disorganization from one or both of your parents. As a result, lack of order upsets you, and you find yourself bothered by your partner, who you also perceive as chaotic and disorganized. Be aware of this and how your feelings of upset toward your partner relate to your own upbringing, love languages, and attachment style.

A secure relationship may rely on your moment-to-moment ability to manage your energy, alertness, and readiness to engage with your partner. As competent managers of our partners, we can become expert at moving, shifting, motivating, influencing, soothing, and inspiring one another.

The relationship inventory and attachment history exercises below are meant to help you and your partner to identify specific patterns in your past and present relationship. These patterns once recognized can then be discussed and worked through.

1. The names of all your romantic partners, past and present. These can include people you've dated briefly. We suggest working vertically, one column at a time. Completing the inventory vertically encourages you to focus less on each particular scenario and to achieve an integrated picture of your working model across relationships. The more information you gather, the better:

2. Write what you remember about the relationship: what it was like and what things stand out most when you try to recall your time together. Once you write down your general recollections of the relationship:
3. Take a closer look and identify specific scenarios that contribute to activation / deactivation of your attachment system:
4. Ask yourself how you responded to these situations: What did you do? What were you thinking? How did you feel? The lists below the inventory are provided to help you recall these reactions:
5. This is a crucial next step. You will need to reassess these experiences from an attachment perspective to gain insight into the issues that affected your relationships.
6. What attachment issues underlie your reactions: Protest behavior? Deactivation? Refer to the lists below as a guide:

The attachment styles assessment below will help you to identify your current attachment style.

(s) = Secure

(av) = Avoidant (island)

(a) = Anxious (wave)

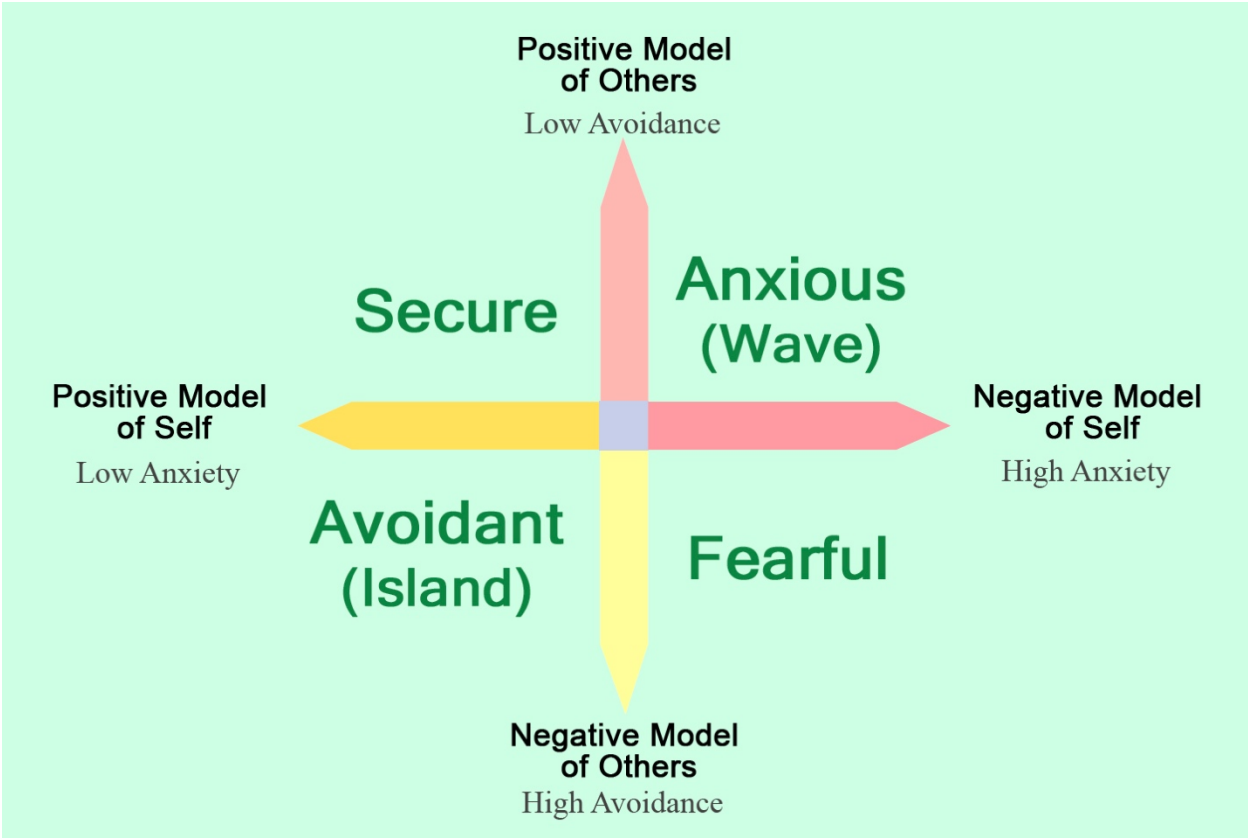
### **Attachment Styles Assessment**

- I often worry that my partner will stop loving me. (a)
- I find it easy to be affectionate with my partner. (s)
- I fear that once someone gets to know the real me, s/he won't like who I am. (a)
- I find that I bounce back quickly after a breakup. It's weird how I can just put someone out of my mind. (av)
- When I'm not involved in a relationship, I feel somewhat anxious and incomplete. (a)
- I find it difficult to emotionally support my partner when s/he is feeling down. (av)
- When my partner is away, I'm afraid that s/he might become interested in someone else. (a)
- I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners. (s)

- My independence is more important to me than my relationships. (av)
- I prefer not to share my innermost feelings with my partner. (av)
- When I show my partner how I feel, I'm afraid s/he will not feel the same about me. (a)
- I am generally satisfied with my romantic relationships. (s)
- I think about my relationships a lot. (a)
- I find it difficult to depend on romantic partners. (av)
- I tend to get very quickly attached to a romantic partner. (a)
- I have little difficulty expressing my needs and wants to my partner. (s)
- I sometimes feel angry or annoyed with my partner without knowing why. (a)
- I am very sensitive to my partner's moods. (a)
- I believe most people are essentially honest and dependable. (s)
- I prefer casual sex with uncommitted partners to intimate sex with one person. (av)
- I'm comfortable sharing my personal thoughts and feelings with my partner. (s)
- I worry that if my partner leaves me, I might never find someone else. (a)
- It makes me nervous when my partner gets too close. (av)
- During a conflict, I tend to impulsively do or say things I later regret, rather than be able to reason about things. (a)
- An argument with my partner doesn't usually cause me to question our entire relationship.  
(s)
- My partners often want me to be more intimate than I am comfortable being. (av)
- I worry that I'm not attractive enough. (a)
- Sometimes people see me as boring because I create little drama in relationships. (av)
- I miss my partner when we're apart, but then when we're together, I feel the need to escape.  
(a)

- When I disagree with someone, I feel comfortable expressing my opinions. (s)
- I hate feeling that other people depend on me. (av)
- If I notice that someone I'm interested in is checking out other people, I don't let it faze me. I might feel a pang of jealousy, but it's fleeting. (s)
- If I notice that someone I'm interested in is checking out other people, I feel relieved. It means s/he's not looking to make things exclusive. (av)
- If I notice that someone I'm interested in is checking out other people, it makes me feel depressed. (a)
- If someone I've been dating begins to act cold and distant, I may wonder what has happened, but I know it's probably not about me. (s)
- If someone I've been dating begins to act cold and distant, I'll probably be indifferent. I might even be relieved. (av)

See image below for attachment style models.



**Partners with a Secure (s) Attachment Style**

### ***Great conflict busters***

During a fight, partners with a secure attachment style don't feel the need to act defensively or to injure or punish their partner, and as a result, prevent the situation from escalating.

### ***Mentally flexible***

Partners with a secure attachment style are not threatened by criticism. They're willing to reconsider their ways, and if necessary, revise their beliefs and strategies.

### ***Effective communicators***

Partners with a secure attachment style expect others to be understanding and responsive, so expressing their feelings freely and accurately to their partners comes naturally to them.

### ***Are not game players***

Partners with a secure attachment style want closeness and believe others want the same, so why play games?

### ***Comfortable with closeness, unconcerned about boundaries***

Partners with a secure attachment style seek intimacy and aren't afraid of being "enmeshed." Because they aren't overwhelmed by a fear of being slighted (as are the anxious) or the need to deactivate (as are the avoidants), they find it easy to enjoy closeness, whether physical or emotional.

### ***Quick to forgive***

Partners with a secure attachment style assume their partners' intentions are good and are therefore likely to forgive them when they do something hurtful.

### ***Inclined to view sex and emotional intimacy as one***

Partners with a secure attachment style don't need to create distance by separating the two (by being close either emotionally or sexually but not both).

### ***Partners with a secure attachment style treat their partners like royalty***

When you've become part of their inner circle, they treat you with love and respect.

### ***Secure in their power to improve the relationship***

Partners with a secure attachment style are confident in their positive beliefs about themselves and others, which makes this assumption logical.

### ***Responsible for their partners' well-being***

Partners with a secure attachment style expect others to be responsive and loving toward them and as a result, are responsive to their partner's needs.

## **Partners with an Avoidant (av) Attachment Style (Island)**

### ***Common Avoidant*** Thoughts, Emotions, and Reactions

## **Thoughts**

- All-or-nothing thinking: *I knew s/he wasn't right for me, and this proves it!*
- Overgeneralizing: *I knew I wasn't made to be in a close relationship.*
- *S/he's taking over my life, and I can't take it!*
- *Now I have to do everything his/her way; the price is too high.*
- *I need to get out of here. I feel suffocated.*
- *If s/he was "the one," this kind of thing wouldn't happen.*
- *When I was with (phantom X), this wouldn't have happened.*
- Malicious intent: *S/he's really out to annoy me, it's so obvious.*
- *S/he just wants to tie me down; this isn't true love.*
- Fantasize about having sex with other people.
- *I'll be better off on my own.*
- *Ugh, s/he's so needy! It's pathetic.*

## **Emotions**

- Withdrawn
- Frustrated
- Angry
- Pressured
- Unappreciated
- Misunderstood
- Resentful
- Hostile/aloof
- Empty
- Deceived
- Tense
- Hate-filled
- Self-righteous/contemptuous
- Despairing/scornful
- Restless/distrustful

## **Actions**

- Act out
- Get up and leave
- Belittle your partner
- Act hostile, look disdainful
- Make critical remarks
- Withdraw mentally or physically
- Minimize physical contact
- Keep emotional sharing to a minimum
- Stop listening to your partner; ignore him

## **Partners with an Anxious (a) Attachment Style (Wave)**

*Common Anxious* Thoughts, Emotions, and Reactions

## **Thoughts**

- Mind reading: *That's it; I know s/he's leaving me.*
- *I'll never find anyone else.*
- *I knew this was too good to last.*
- All-or-nothing thinking: *I've ruined everything, there's nothing I can do to mend the situation.*
- *S/he can't treat me this way! I'll show him/her!*
- *I knew something would go wrong; nothing ever works out right for me.*
- *I have to talk to or see him/her right now.*
- *S/he'd better come crawling back to beg my forgiveness, otherwise s/he can forget about me forever.*
- *Maybe if I look drop-dead gorgeous or act seductive, things will work out.*
- *S/he is so amazing, why would s/he want to be with me anyway?*
- Remember only the good things their partner ever did and said after calming down from a fight.
- Recalling only the bad things their partner has ever done when they're fighting.

## **Emotions**

- Sad
- Angry
- Fearful
- Resentful
- Frustrated
- Depressed
- Hopeless
- Despairing
- Jealous
- Hostile
- Vengeful
- Guilty
- Self-loathing
- Restless
- Uneasy
- Humiliated
- Hate-filled
- Uncertain
- Agitated
- Rejected
- Unloved
- Lonely/misunderstood
- Unappreciated

## **Actions**

- Act out
- Attempt to reestablish contact at any cost
- Pick a fight
- Wait for them to make the first reconciliation move
- Threaten to leave

- Act hostile—roll your eyes, look disdainful
- Try to make him/her feel jealous
- Act busy or unapproachable
- Withdraw