

These are normal fears. Both arise in all of us— though one usually predominates in intimate relationships. It is only when these fears become so intense as to affect our judgment & behavior that they become problematic.

Adult relating is in the capacity to commit ourselves without being immobilized by the fear of abandonment if someone pulls too far away, or by the fear of engulfment if someone gets too close. It will seem as if these fears result directly from the behavior of our adult partner, but these are phantom fears. What is hurting us is gone but still stimulates. We are reacting to our own inner landscape, one ravaged by archaic plunder that has never been acknowledged, restored, or forgiven.

Actually, an adult cannot be abandoned, only left, and cannot be engulfed, only crowded!

Fear of Abandonment

Fear of Independence so that one:

- 1) ... has trouble letting go when the other needs space
- 2) ... seeks maximum contact (clings)
- 3) ... is enmeshed or obsessive about the other's story
- 4) ... is care taking of the other and not of oneself
- 5) ... always wants to give more (sense of never giving enough)
- 6) ... goes along with others' ideas, plans, or timing
- 7) ... has no personal boundaries or bottom line for abuse
- 8) ... copes with any conduct
- 9) ... is addicted to the other
- 10) ... needs constant reassurance that the other will stay
- 11) ... fears aloneness
- 12) ... rationalizes (makes excuses that enable coping)
- 13) ... protects the other from the impact of one's own feelings
- 14) ... shows fear, represses anger
- 15) ... distress in comings/goings
- 16) ... manifests clinging, closeness, and reaching out

Fear of Engulfment

Fear of dependency so that one:

- 1) ... has trouble making a commitment
- 2) ... seeks more space (distances)
- 3) ... takes the other for granted or is indifferent
- 4) ... feels entitled to need fulfillment by the other
- 5) ... construes giving as obligating or receiving as smothering
- 6) ... needs to be in control, to make decisions, or to be right
- 7) ... has no tolerance of disloyalty or inadequacy
- 8) ... has rigid boundaries with no tolerance of error
- 9) ... seduces the other and then withholds
- 10) ... needs the other to 'stay put while I come and go at will'
- 11) ... becomes anxious with extended togetherness
- 12) ... intellectualizes (thinks or explains away feelings)
- 13) ... avoids or minimizes one's own and the other's feelings
- 14) ... shows anger, represses fear
- 15) ... distress in giving/receiving
- 16) ... manifests coldness, rigidity, and distance