




## Relationship Attachment Styles

### How secure are you in your relationships?

**Attachment theory** is based on research that suggests that the ability to form healthy adult relationships depends on the type of attachment formed in childhood. Attachment theory states that infants who experienced secure attachments to their caregivers grew into adults with healthier self-esteem. Securely attached adults have more successful relationships at work and at home. Securely attached adults also suffer less depression and anxiety.

<b>Anxious/ambivalent</b>	<b>Secure</b>	<b>Avoidant</b>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fears independence</li><li>• Worried, insecure, jealous</li><li>• Codependent</li><li>• People pleaser</li><li>• Fear of abandonment</li><li>• Loses self in relationship</li><li>• Unequal relationships</li><li>• Drama and chaos</li></ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Independent/Assertive style</li><li>• Peaceful, confident, happy</li><li>• Negotiates compatibility</li><li>• Trustworthy, honest</li><li>• No fear of abandonment</li><li>• Synergistic relationships</li><li>• Reciprocal: give &amp; take</li><li>• No drama</li></ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fears dependency</li><li>• Irritable, moody</li><li>• Aloof, distant</li><li>• Suspicious, distrusting</li><li>• Maintains distance</li><li>• Avoids intimacy</li><li>• Unequal relationships</li><li>• Drama and chaos</li></ul>

\*Researchers John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth introduced the attachment theory in the sixties, before brain science was understood and when we blamed moms for just about everything, including schizophrenia. As with many theories and research, cultural, environmental and neurological differences skew the interpretation of the data.

### Thoughts for consideration

1. **Fear is not love.** Neither is worry, control, competition or jealousy. Understanding the differences is HUGE!
2. **Your feelings of anger, mistrust, insecurity, jealousy and worry are clues that YOU have a relationship issue to address.** A partner's words or behavior may trigger your emotions---but those emotions, inside of your mind and body, belong to you. They are your responsibility to understand, cope and problem-solve. Never blame your partner for your emotions.

### Practical Application

If, after looking over attachment theory, you believe that you have an attachment issue—or you have a strong belief that the person you chose as a partner has an attachment issue—now what? Let's improve your relationship skills based on attachment theory.

1. **Circle the traits that you struggle with in either the Anxious/ambivalent or the Avoidant columns above.**
2. **Create an action plan for how you wish to address each trait. Use your own or consider the options on the next page as a guide.**

Examples of Action plans to address anxious/ambivalent relationship attachment:

- *Fears independence. Action Plan: Increase independence.*  
Notice when you feel and act the most independent. (School? Work? Parenting? Domestic duties? Finances? Hobbies? Friendships? Travel? Sports etc.)  
How did you become brave enough to declare independence in this area?  
What thoughts allow you to feel confident enough to be this independent?  
What actions led you to this level of confidence?  
Create a plan for giving yourself the practice, support, and resources necessary to begin improving your independence in areas where you struggle. ANYTHING you choose that allows you to feel or act more independent is ok. Do not seek anyone else's approval or validation. Give yourself your own approval. You are allowed to make mistakes when you are growing your independence...releasing the fear of mistakes is part of the journey toward being the grown-up in your own life.
- *Worried, insecure, jealous. Action Plan: Take responsibility for your emotions, embrace them and then practice calming yourself down.* Use the worksheets on this website to address anxiety, transform worry into wisdom and stop checkers cheating with healthier boundaries.
- *Codependent. Action Plan: Learn more about healthy boundaries and recovery from codependency via a 12 step program or reading self-help books.* The same tools apply for the *People pleaser* and *Loses self in relationship*.
- *Fear of abandonment. Action Plan is a Reframe—"adults cannot be abandoned.* Puppies, kittens and children may be abandoned or orphaned, but adults make choices and have the right to end relationships. That feeling you have when someone leaves you is not abandonment. It might be separation anxiety, grief, loss or simply an opportunity to show up for yourself. Remember when you are alone, that means you are with yourself. What delightful company!"
- *Unequal relationships. Action Plan is to become independent.* Use the "increase independence action plan.
- *Drama and chaos. Action Plan is to set boundaries, align your actions with your goals/values and structure a healthy lifestyle including bedtime routine.* Use the Creating Best Results Tool as well as the stress management tools on this site. Enlist the aide of a drama free friend, ask them how they manage to avoid chaos and drama!

**You get the idea—basically you are living the advice that you give people you care about. You are becoming the best version of yourself.** You create secure relationships with others AFTER you are secure within yourself!

Now go ahead and create your own action plan. If you tend to be an avoidant partner in relationships rather than an anxious/ambivalent one, then you have to create your own action plan for change to take place. We never pursue a distancer... chasing just makes you run away faster.