

UNDERSTANDING ATTACHMENT: THE BLUEPRINT FOR ADULT RELATIONSHIPS



Have you ever noticed recurring patterns in your relationship, like pulling away when things get close, or feeling anxious when a loved one seems distant? These reactions often tie back to something called your **attachment style**.

WHAT IS AN ATTACHMENT STYLE?

Attachment style refers to the habitual ways we think, feel, and behave in close relationships. These styles begin forming in childhood, based on how our caregivers responded to our emotional needs. When caregivers are consistently supportive and responsible, we're more likely to develop what is called a secure attachment. When that support was inconsistent, intrusive, or absent, other attachment patterns can develop. Some examples of these are *anxious*, *avoidant*, or *disorganized*.

WHY DO ATTACHMENT STYLES MATTER?

Gaining insight into attachment styles can have a powerful impact on our everyday lives, especially when it comes to our romantic relationships. Our attachment style influences how we communicate, handle conflict, express affection, and respond to closeness or distance. Understanding attachment styles provides a reliable framework for making sense of our own behaviors and emotional responses, as well as those of our partners. It can help explain recurring patterns in relationships, like why we might fear abandonment, avoid intimacy, or have difficulty feeling secure, even when we deeply care for someone. By learning about attachment, we're not just gaining knowledge, we're gaining tools. Tools for healthier communication, deeper emotional connection, and more fulfilling, secure relationships.

CAN YOU CHANGE YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE?

Yes, attachment styles can change over time. Though shaped by early experiences, they can shift through relationships, therapy, personal growth, or life events. Understanding these patterns is the first step toward building healthier, more secure connections.

SECURE ATTACHMENT:

- Comfortable with intimacy and independence
- Warm, loving, and emotionally available
- Communicates needs clearly
- Trusts partner and maintains healthy boundaries
- Resolves conflict through open communication
- Attentive, affectionate, and accepting

ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT:

- Craves closeness but fears abandonment and rejection
- Often preoccupied with relationship worries
- Sensitive to criticism and needs frequent reassurance
- May struggle with jealousy and distrust
- Conflict can feel threatening or overwhelming

AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT:

- Values independence over closeness
- Avoids vulnerability, intimacy, and commitment
- Emotionally distant; struggles with expressing needs
- Discomfort with conflict and emotional expression
- Often appears aloof, rigid, or guarded

DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT:

- Mix of anxious and avoidant behaviors
- Desires intimacy but also fears and distrusts it
- Behavior can be inconsistent or contradictory
- Prone to emotional extremes and intense reactions
- Difficulty with setting and maintaining boundaries
- Often involved in high-conflict relationships

Understanding your attachment style isn't about labeling yourself, it's about gaining insight. With self-awareness and the right tools, you can build stronger, more secure relationships, rooted in emotional clarity and genuine connection. Want help exploring your attachment style? Our EAP counselors can help!



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