

What is Your Attachment Style?

Objective

To identify your attachment style and how it has impacted your life.

What to Know

Early life experiences, including the relationship you had with your parents or caregivers, become the way you relate to the world as an adult. Your self-worth and ability to be caring and genuine are shaped by these experiences. Harmful childhood experiences (even those you do not remember) can lead to self-protection, which can inhibit your ability to develop close emotional connections (or “attachments”) with others.

There are four attachment styles, and in general, the attachment style you develop in childhood stays with you throughout your life. It influences your feelings of safety, security, and the meaning you give to your life experiences.

What to Do

You might be unsure about your attachment style, but there are generally signs that will indicate your style. Review the statements below and check off the ones that apply to you. Then count the checkmarks and write down the total for each section.

Secure/Autonomous

raised in a consistent, reliable, and caring way

learned early on that the world is a safe place

As an adult, I:

communicate in a clear, direct, and honest manner.

view others as generally dependable and supportive.

am compassionate and responsive to others.

love and feel loveable.

am mentally and emotionally flexible.

explore options and ask for advice.

accept differences.

trust others.

am confident.

have a strong sense of self.

can discuss painful childhood memories without much anxiety or stress.

understand and feel forgiveness toward my parents

Total

Avoidant/Dismissive

raised with uncaring, dismissive, or critical caregivers

As an adult, I:

- ___ have vague and non-specific early childhood memories.
- ___ avoid intimacy and close involvement with others.
- ___ am generally emotionally distant.
- ___ prefer to be independent and rely on myself.
- ___ choose to be isolated; some have called me a "loner."
- ___ have difficulty expressing my needs or asking for help.
- ___ am cool, controlled, ambitious, and successful.
- ___ suppress my feelings.
- ___ avoid conflict.
- ___ am frequently sarcastic.
- ___ have been called "passive-aggressive" by others.
- ___ avoid relying on anyone because I don't want to be dependent or viewed as weak.
- ___ idealize my parents or caregivers; I don't think they did anything wrong.
- ___ deny facts and feelings associated with my parents' behavior.

___ Total

Ambivalent/Anxious

- ___ raised with caregivers who alternated between warmth and availability and coldness and rejection (for no apparent reason)
- ___ childhood characterized by disappointment, frustrating efforts to please parents, and role reversals (for example, parentification)

As an adult, I:

- ___ offer overly detailed stories about my past; I tend to give too much information.
- ___ continue to re-experience past hurts and rejections.
- ___ have been called bossy or controlling.
- ___ constantly criticize myself.
- ___ am insecure.
- ___ constantly doubt myself.
- ___ often seek reassurance from others.
- ___ dislike rules or authority.
- ___ tend to be impatient, critical, or argumentative.
- ___ fear abandonment by friends or romantic partners.
- ___ have been told I'm clingy or needy.
- ___ enjoy drama or "stirring the pot."
- ___ self-sabotage.
- ___ find it hard to trust others.
- ___ am still emotionally enmeshed with parents and family issues.
- ___ am unaware of responsibilities in relationships, work, or life.

___ Total

Avoidant/Anxious

- ___ history of parental abuse, neglect, or significant loss
- ___ parents or caregivers scared me
- ___ unresponsive, inconsistent, punitive, and insensitive parenting

As an adult, I:

- ___ am frightened by memories and emotions associated with early trauma.
- ___ sometimes feel emotionally disconnected.
- ___ view others as unavailable, threatening, or rejecting.
- ___ tend to get involved in abusive relationships.
- ___ am fearful of genuine closeness.
- ___ just want to be loved.
- ___ have a hard time regulating or managing my emotions.
- ___ feel unworthy of love and support.
- ___ lack empathy and rarely feel remorseful.
- ___ have been told by others that I'm selfish or controlling.
- ___ dislike taking responsibility for my choices or actions.
- ___ don't like to follow rules.
- ___ am confused about what healthy relationships look like.
- ___ have abused a partner and/or my children.
- ___ abuse alcohol or drugs.
- ___ have been involved in illegal activities.

___ Total

Now, review the totals under each attachment style.

Write down the style with the highest score: _____

Was it easy or difficult to identify your attachment style? Why?

Think about your relationship with your parents or caregivers as a child. Reflect on the following questions and write down your answers on the next page.

- How were they toward you as a child?
- How did you respond to them?
- To whom did you go for comfort?
- Were they negligent, abusive, or reliable?

