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?
Do you think your attachment style holds you back in life? Why or why not?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

In what ways has your attachment style impacted your relationships? Your family life? Your work or career? Other areas of your life? If you’re unsure, that’s OK. Try to be as detailed as possible.

______________________________________________________________________________
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How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________