



Attachment Styles *explained...*

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What are attachment styles?

According to Bolby (1969) attachment styles are expectations people develop about relationships with others, based on the relationship they had with their primary caregiver when they were infants.

There are four attachment styles



SECURE ATTACHMENT

Bolby (1998) explained securely attached people have capacity to connect well and securely in relationships with others while also having the capacity for autonomy. Secure attachment is characterized by trust, an adaptive response to being abandoned, and the belief that one is worthy of love.

Secure attachment characteristics may look like:

- Ability to form close and meaningful relationships**
- Enjoying time with others and time alone**
- Emotionally tolerating distress in relationships**
- Trusting others**

AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT

People with an avoidant attachment struggle to get close or to trust others. According to attachment theory this is a learned defense mechanism to protect oneself from being hurt, as people with avoidant attachments were often ignored by their caregiver or their caregiver was not present.

Avoidant characteristics may look like:

- Difficulty expressing emotions and vulnerability
- Hyper-independent traits
- Difficulty with intimacy
- Shutting down during relational conflict

ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT

Anxiously attachment people often are concerned that others will not reciprocate their desire for intimacy. Attachment theory explains this is caused when an infant learns that their caregiver is unreliable and does not consistently provide responsive care towards their needs.

Anxious characteristics may look like:

- "Neediness" in relationships
- Need for reassurance and validation
- Difficulty being alone
- Discomfort with relational conflict and a desire to "fix" the conflict

DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT

A disorganized attachment is often the result of attachment-related traumas, where parents have displayed scary and inconsistent behaviors which causes children to be confused. Children are obligated to depend on their parents for care but are also afraid of them.

Disorganized characteristics may look like:

- Seeking extreme closeness followed by extreme distance
- Distrust of others
- Poor self-esteem and emotional regulations
- Fear of intimacy and abandonment