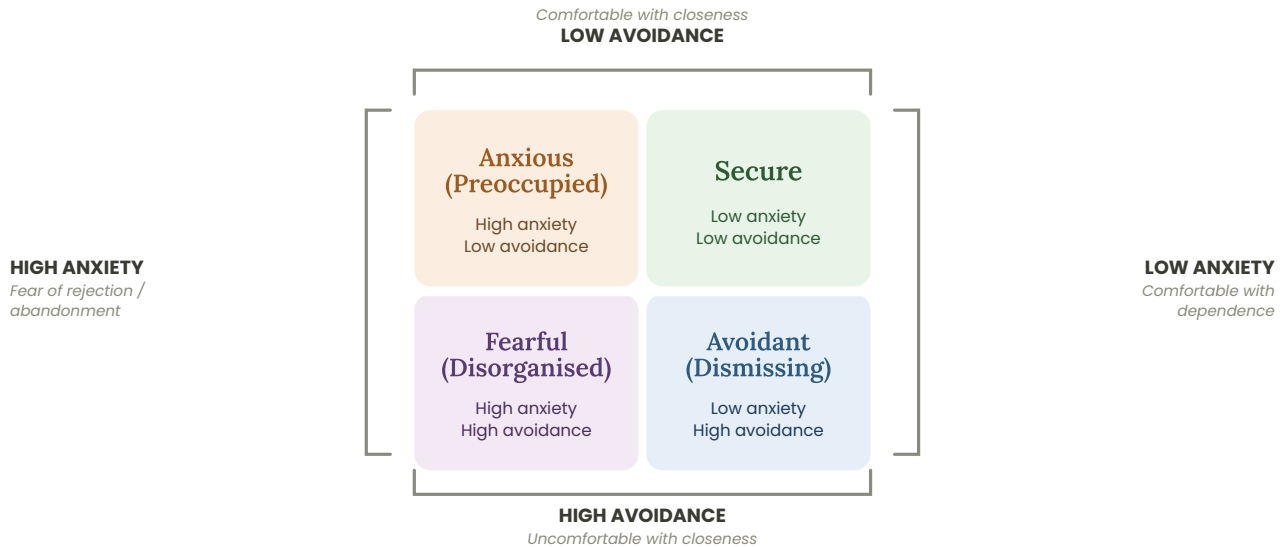


Attachment Styles

UNDERSTANDING HOW WE CONNECT

Attachment describes patterns in how we think about, feel in and respond to closeness and independence in relationships. These patterns develop through early experiences and can continue to influence relationships across the lifespan. Attachment is a spectrum — not a fixed category — and people can show different patterns in different relationships.



Anxious (Preoccupied)

- Often seek closeness and reassurance
- May worry about being rejected or not valued
- Can be sensitive to changes in a partner's availability
- May become hypervigilant to signs of distance
- Often desire connection but can feel uncertain or anxious in it

Underlying model

- View of self: "I'm not always enough."
- View of others: "Others may not be reliable or available."

Secure

- Generally comfortable with both closeness and independence
- Able to seek and offer support
- More trusting and less fearful of rejection
- Can communicate needs and boundaries
- Better able to tolerate conflict and repair after ruptures

Underlying model

- View of self: "I am worthy of love and support."
- View of others: "Others are generally reliable and available."

Fearful (Disorganised)

- Often desire closeness but also fear it
- May experience mixed feelings about trust and intimacy
- Can be sensitive to signs of rejection and also withdraw
- May have had frightening, inconsistent or unresolved early experiences
- Often the most conflicted pattern, with approach-avoidance dynamics

Underlying model

- View of self: "I want closeness, but it feels unsafe."
- View of others: "Others may be a source of comfort and also of harm."

Avoidant (Dismissing)

- Often value independence and self-reliance
- May feel uncomfortable with emotional closeness
- Can downplay the importance of relationships
- May withdraw when others seek more intimacy
- Often manage distress by minimising or shutting down emotional needs

Underlying model

- View of self: "I can't rely on others; I need to be self-sufficient."
- View of others: "Others may not be available or may be intrusive."

Important to Know

- Attachment styles exist on a continuum — most people show a mix of patterns, with one usually more dominant
- Attachment can be context- and relationship-specific
- Early experiences can influence attachment, but it can also change over time through new relational experiences
- Attachment style is not a diagnosis and does not determine your worth or ability to have healthy relationships

Toward Greater Security

1. Increased awareness of your patterns
2. Understanding and working with early experiences
3. Developing self-compassion
4. Practising new ways of relating
5. Experiencing consistently supportive, respectful relationships
6. Therapeutic support can be helpful

A Note on Language

The terms used here (secure, anxious, avoidant, fearful) are from well-established attachment research (e.g. Ainsworth, Bowlby, Main, Bartholomew & Horowitz). They describe patterns of relating, not fixed personality types. People can show different patterns in different relationships and can move toward greater security over time.

Awareness creates choice, and choice creates new possibilities for connection.

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