

# Signs of Secure, Respectful Connection

PSYCHOEDUCATION · SECURITY, RESPECT AND RESPONSIVENESS IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

*What closeness can look and feel like when it is going reasonably well*

Attachment research often describes secure connection as being able to turn to someone for comfort while still feeling free to be yourself. These signs can apply to partners, friends and family: patterns to notice over time, in both directions, not a test to pass.

## 01 Nine signs to notice

*more often than not, from both people*

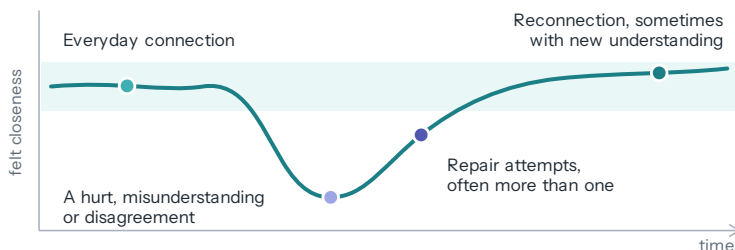
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|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SAFETY</b><br><i>Feeling safe to be yourself</i> |  <b>Emotional safety</b><br>Feelings and differing views can usually be shared without mockery, punishment or being frozen out.<br><i>e.g. Saying "that hurt" and being heard.</i>                           |  <b>Feeling understood</b><br>Closeness often grows when people feel understood, valued and cared for, not just heard.<br><i>e.g. Follow-up questions; your view reflected.</i>                    |  <b>Room to be yourself</b><br>Choices, friendships, time and goals are respected and supported, rather than controlled.<br><i>e.g. Plans with friends met with interest.</i>           |
| <b>TRUST</b><br><i>Someone you can lean on</i>      |  <b>Reliability</b><br>Words and actions tend to match over time. Trust usually builds gradually and can be slow to rebuild.<br><i>e.g. Doing what they said they would.</i>                                 |  <b>Turning towards</b><br>Small bids for attention are often noticed and answered, linked in couple studies with warmer conflict.<br><i>e.g. Looking up when you share something.</i>             |  <b>Support and warmth</b><br>Comfort when things are hard, encouragement to grow, and genuine warmth about good news.<br><i>e.g. Your wins celebrated, not competed with.</i>          |
| <b>CARE</b><br><i>Handling difficulty with care</i> |  <b>Disagreeing without threat</b><br>Differences can be discussed without contempt, intimidation, name-calling or threats, even when feelings run high.<br><i>e.g. Agreeing to pause, then coming back.</i> |  <b>Repair after hurt</b><br>Both people can own mistakes and try to reconnect. Repair tends to rebuild trust when followed by changed behaviour.<br><i>e.g. "I was sharp earlier. I'm sorry."</i> |  <b>Boundaries and consent</b><br>A "no" about touch, sex, money, time or privacy is accepted without pressure, sulking or punishment.<br><i>e.g. Checking in rather than assuming.</i> |

On the evidence: findings mostly come from Western couple and friendship samples and show associations, not causes; connection can look different across cultures.

## 02 Security includes rupture and repair

*a clinical way of thinking, not a measured law*

*Secure does not mean conflict-free.* Many clinicians describe security as a growing, shared confidence that connection can be found again after a disconnection. Repair usually needs both people's willingness, and it is never a reason to accept ongoing harm.



|     |                    |                                              |
|-----|--------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| i   | <b>Notice</b>      | Recognise that something has shifted.        |
| ii  | <b>Pause</b>       | Allow time to settle if emotions run high.   |
| iii | <b>Acknowledge</b> | Name your part, without taking on all of it. |
| iv  | <b>Understand</b>  | Get curious about how it felt for them.      |
| v   | <b>Reconnect</b>   | Find a small way back; follow through.       |

## 03 Reflecting on one relationship

*optional · a partner, friend, family member or anyone close*

Signs from section 01 I notice fairly often:

Something I'd like more of, and how I might ask:

Something I bring, or would like to offer:

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### SOURCES

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