

The four attachment styles: a practical reference guide

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The four attachment styles explained

1 Secure attachment

You are comfortable with closeness and independence. You trust that people generally mean well and that relationships can be safe. You communicate needs directly.

2 Anxious (preoccupied) attachment

You crave closeness but fear abandonment. You may need frequent reassurance and read potential rejection into neutral situations.

3 Avoidant (dismissing) attachment

You value independence and self-sufficiency. Emotional closeness feels uncomfortable. You tend to withdraw when relationships become more intimate.

4 Disorganized (fearful) attachment

You want closeness but also fear it. Intimacy feels both necessary and dangerous. This style is often linked to early experiences of trauma, loss, or unpredictable caregiving.

5 Attachment styles are not permanent

Research shows that attachment patterns can shift, especially through secure relationships, therapy, and increased self-awareness. A disorganized attachment can move toward earned security over time.

6 Your style affects more than romantic relationships

Attachment patterns show up in friendships, work relationships, and how you relate to authority figures, not just in romantic partnerships.

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