

Attachment Styles

Attachment styles are the ways we formed attachments with our primary carers in childhood and reflect how we relate to other people in our adult relationships. The four main attachment styles are secure, anxious, avoidant and disorganised.

Secure

People with secure attachment are comfortable with intimacy and independence. They trust people, communicate openly and handle conflict constructively.

Anxious (Preoccupied)

People with anxious attachment desire closeness, fear abandonment and need constant reassurance.

Avoidant (Dismissive)

People with avoidant attachment are independent and emotionally distant. They struggle with intimacy, suppress emotions and fear vulnerability.

Disorganised (Fearful-Avoidant)

People with disorganised attachment are a mix of anxious and avoidant, characterised by a desire for love but fearful of getting hurt, often resulting from childhood trauma. They have difficulty trusting others, give out mixed signals and their behaviour is inconsistent.

Earned Secure Attachment

People with insecure attachment styles (anxious, avoidant, disorganised) can develop a secure attachment style by being in a relationship with someone who is securely attached. This is known as earned secure attachment. A secure partner or therapist's consistent, emotionally available and stable behaviour can help rewire insecure attachment patterns through repeated positive experiences. Secure partners and therapists are consistently available and supportive which provides a safe foundation for insecure individuals to learn new and healthy relational behaviours. A secure person's ability to remain calm during conflict allows the insecure person to learn better emotional self-regulation, rather than reacting with panic, withdrawal or anger. Repeated exposure to a safe, trusting relationship rewires the brain and changes deeply ingrained attachment habits. While a secure partner or therapist provides the necessary attunement and consistency, the insecure person must have the motivation to change and grow in emotional maturity to develop a secure attachment style.