

The Four Attachment Styles in Children and Adults

There are four different types of Attachment Styles which arise from different types of relationships that a child experiences with his/her caregivers.

Secure Attachment

- Readily explores the world around him/her
- Seeks contact with others when distressed
- Socially competent
- Does not internalize rejection or criticism
- Effectively able to regulate emotions
- Self-confident
- Demonstrates greater persistence
- Able to work independently

Anxious Attachment

- Clingy, dependent behavior
- Exaggerated displays of emotion or helplessness
- Difficult to soothe
- Seek contact but do not appear to be comforted by it
- May appear hyperactive
- May express strong need and concern for attachment figure
- May be angry with attachment figure while attempting to try to please them

Avoidant Attachment

- Demonstrates a cool indifference - ignoring or avoiding adult's attention
- Does not seek contact when distressed
- Does not communicate distress or vulnerability
- Avoids becoming emotionally close
- May appear more interested in classroom materials than people
- May communicate dysfunctional levels of anger

Disorganized Attachment

- Appears to want to both approach and avoid relationships
- May take care to an unnatural degree
- May appear confident, yet brittle and anxious
- May want to punish or embarrass attachment figures
- Play may be characterized by violence or helplessness
- Cannot discuss attachment coherently or may express unresolved loss

Below are the ways in which attachment styles manifest in adulthood

Secure Attachment

- Positive view of self and others
- Find it easy and comfortable to be emotionally close to others
- Comfortable depending on others and having others depend on them
- Don't worry about being alone or having others not accept them; comfortable with distance from others
- Believe they are valuable and worthy as individuals and also that others are trustworthy and dependable
- Exhibit a balance of intimacy and independence that is a hallmark of secure attachments
- Report greater satisfaction and adjustment in relationships

Anxious Attachment

- Seek high levels of emotional closeness, approval, and responsiveness from others with a sense of urgency. Uncomfortable with distance from others.
- Value emotional intimacy in relationships to an extent that they can become overly dependent on others to meet their needs, while feeling own needs can never be met
- Less positive views of themselves; oftentimes doubting their worth
- High levels of emotional expressiveness, worry, and impulsiveness in relationships
- Lessened awareness of the boundaries and differences between self and others

Avoidant Attachment

- Strong sense of independence and self-sufficiency that can lead others to experience loneliness and emotional distance in their presence
- Minimize the importance of close relationships and the communication of emotion
- Tend to suppress and hide feelings
- Deal with rejection by distancing themselves
- Uncomfortable with closeness with others

Disorganized Attachment

- Mixed feelings about close relationships
- Desire emotionally close relationships yet feel uncomfortable with emotional closeness
- Negative views about self and partners
- View themselves as unworthy of responsiveness, at the same time not trusting partners' intentions
- Seek less emotional closeness and frequently suppress or deny feelings
- Less comfortable expressing affection
- May experience freezing, states of rigidity, "stuck" repetitive behaviors, or flooding of emotion
- Uncomfortable with closeness and distance from others

